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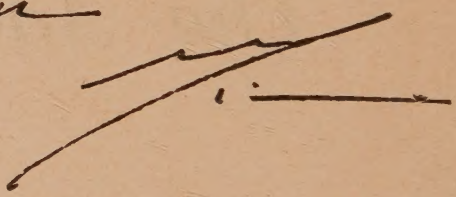
The Advent

To all those who aspire

Open yourself to the new Force
Let it do in you its work of
Transformation



april 1956.

The ADVENT

APRIL, 1956

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A new epiphany appeared in her,
A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god.

SAVITRI IV. 1.

Vol. XIII. No. 2 April, 1956

THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERFECTION

THERE is a flower to which we have given this name. It is the familiar *Champa.* The flower has five petals. Each petal represents a quality or movement of consciousness, the five qualities or movements making up the psychological perfection. In the beginning I named them—(1) Surrender, (2) Sincerity, (3) Faith, (4) Devotion and (5) Aspiration. Of course the meaning can be changed. In fact, when I give the flower to someone, I do not always mean the same qualities. I change according to the need of the person and at the moment. However we can have all the same a general scheme. In any case, in all combinations and to whomsoever I may give, the first among the qualities is and must always be *Sincerity.* For, if there is no sincerity, one cannot move even half a step. So sincerity is the first thing necessary and should be always there.

This can be translated by another word, if you like. That would be transparence. Let me explain.

* Based on Mother's Talks

When someone comes to me and I look at him, I look into his eyes, straight into his eyes. If the person is sincere, that is to say, *transparent*, I enter into him through his eyes and I see his soul clearly. But when I look and see in the eyes a cloud, and then a screen or continuing farther I meet a wall or something very black and when I find I have to pass through all that and drill holes at places to go through, even so at the last minute I am not sure if I do not stand against a bronze wall that refuses all entry, then in such cases I do not find the soul and the person I can declare to be not sincere. Literally, such a person is not transparent. So, then, this is the first thing.

The next item which is also obviously necessary for all progress is Faith. There is also another word for it which although seemingly limited, possesses for me at least a greater importance; I mean, trust. If your faith is not made of a complete trust in the Divine or if you begin to lose the trust, then you gradually lose faith in the Divine Power or in the Divine Goodness or in the trust that the Divine has in you. These are the three great stumbling-blocks.

It happens at times, if not quite often, that starting with a faith which you describe unshakable, the faith that the Divine alone does everything and can do everything, that whatever occurs in me or in others, everywhere, is the work of the Divine and of none other than the Divine, you continuing to the logical end, apparently at least, till after a time you begin to accuse the Divine of the most frightful misdeeds, make him a veritable demon being the author or abettor of all the evils in the world.

Or you say, you have faith in the Divine, but as to this world, you know what it is and you put no trust in it. You say: "In the first instance, I suffer much, I am unlucky, much more unlucky than any other person"—one is always more miserable than one's neighbour, be sure—"life is unkind to me. Now, if the Divine is divine, all kindness, all generosity, all love and harmony, how is it that I am so unfortunate? The Divine must then be powerless. Otherwise, how can he leave me in unhappiness, if he is so kind?" That is the second stumbling-block. The third one is this. There are people who are too modest, full of an excessive and misguided humility, who say: "Surely the Divine has rejected me, I am good for nothing, He can do nothing with me, it is better for me to give it up all." Such difficulties will always crop up, if along with faith you do not have complete trust in the Divine.

Next in the series comes *Devotion*. Certainly, devotion is very good;

but here too, unless it is accompanied with many other things, it can lead you into much error. For with devotion one keeps one's ego also. Out of devotion you may behave most egoistically. You think of your devotion, only of your devotion, that is to say, you think of yourself alone, you do not think of others, of the world, of the work that you do and ought to do—you become formidably egoistic. And when you see that the Divine, for some reason or other, does not answer your devotion with an enthusiasm you expect of him, you despair and fall into one or all of the three difficulties I spoke of just now. Either the Divine must be cruel—we know of devotees who throw all their anger upon the Divine, accusing him of neglect and cruelty; or then they think, "I must have made a grave blunder, I am hopeless in his eyes and I am rejected."

Now, there is a movement which one can have and constantly along with devotion, as complementary to it—a sense of gratitude, that the Divine exists and one feels a kind of gratefulness, born of wonder, which fills you truly with a sublime joy; the very fact that the Divine exists, that there is something in the universe which is the Divine, that it is not merely a monstrosity that we see here below, brings a flow of unspeakable gladness in you. Every time the least thing puts you in contact with this sublime reality of the Divine's existence, whether directly or indirectly, your heart is filled with a feeling so intense, so marvellous, the feeling precisely of a profound gratitude which has of all things the sweetest savour, that no other joy can bring. So I say devotion by itself is incomplete, it must have gratitude as its companion.

We come to the next term. I spoke to you once of courage; I said courage means the taste for adventure, the supreme adventure. This taste for the supreme adventure is Aspiration—aspiration that seizes you wholly and throws you without calculation or reserve, without the possibility of withdrawal, into the great adventure of the discovery of the Divine, the great adventure of meeting the Divine and the still greater adventure of realising the Divine. It means throwing oneself into an unknown venture without looking backward, without asking even for a moment what is going to happen—for if you ask where you are going to fall, you never start, you remain fixed where you are, your both feet firmly rooted on the spot, fearing lest you lose your balance. That is why I call the thing courage. But truly it is aspiration. The two go together. True aspiration is something full of courage.

We have till now, then, four elements. The fifth one I wish to add is

Endurance. For, if you are not capable of facing your difficulties without getting discouraged, without abandoning it, because it is too difficult, and if you are not able to bear blows, pocket them and go on never minding —for the blows come because of your faults and mistakes—you cannot go very far: at the first turning where you lose sight of your small habitual life, you despair and give up the game.

Endurance in its physical expression is perseverance. That is to say, you must be prepared to do a thousand times, if necessary, the same thing over and over again. You take a step forward, you think you are firmly placed; but there will always crop up something or other which brings back the old difficulty. You think you have solved the problem, you will have to solve it again: it will come in a slightly different form, but it is the same problem. You must be ready to face the problem, go through the same difficulties a million times. That is how you are sure to arrive at the goal.

We have left out one very important factor—Surrender. Now Sri Aurobindo says that surrender is the first and the absolute condition for doing Yoga. Without it there is no Yoga. So we can say that it is not one of the qualities required, but that it is the primary indispensable attitude for one to be able to begin Yoga. If you have not decided to surrender you cannot start on the path. But to make this surrender total and complete all the five that we have enumerated are needed. This is then what I propose. We put Surrender on the top at the head; for to do the integral Yoga, one must first of all take the resolution to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, that is the one way. Afterwards, one must have the five psychological perfections.

25-1-1956

THE ORIGIN OF DESIRE

From where does desire come? Buddha said that it came from Ignorance. It is almost that. Desire is something in the being which imagines that it requires an object other than itself for its satisfaction. This is sheer ignorance, proved by the fact that in 99 cases out a hundred when one has the thing desired, one no more cares for it.

At its very origin, I think, it was an obscure need for growth or increase. In the lowest forms of life we find love transformed into an instinctive and irresistible need for enlarging, swelling, absorbing, adding to it another body. This need to take in is desire. So perhaps if you go back far enough

into the last depths of inconscience, you will see that the ultimate source of desire is love: it is love in its most dark and inconscient form. It is, as I said, a need for accretion, an attraction for an outside object in order to embrace it, swallow it, make it part of itself and so grow bigger. Now, suppose you have before you something beautiful, harmonious, pleasing: if you have the true consciousness, you enjoy and are happy to the full, by simply looking at the thing, by having an inner contact in consciousness with the beauty and harmony that is there. And there the matter ends. You have the joy and that is all. Such a movement is very common in the artist. He sees a beautiful person, he has the joy of observing the grace of the form, the harmony of the movements and all that. But it does not go beyond. He is perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied when he has seen something beautiful.

An ordinary consciousness, on the contrary, I mean, very ordinary, flat as ordinary things are, when it sees something beautiful, whether it is a material object or a person, it immediately jumps at it, shouting, "I must have it!" It is pitiable, isn't it? And even then with such a consciousness you cannot enjoy beauty, for the anguish of desire will pursue you. You lose true enjoyment but do not get anything in return. There is no happiness in desiring something. It only puts you in an unhappy state.

Buddha also said that there was a greater joy in overcoming a desire than in satisfying it. Everybody can make this experiment and have the experience. It is quite interesting to do so.

When you give up a desire, there occurs at the moment an inner communion with your psychic being and that is why one gets a greater joy in rejecting a desire than in fulfilling it. Besides, when you do satisfy your desire always there is a bitter after-taste somewhere. There is no desire which when satisfied does not leave this bitterness in you, as when you have taken too sweet a thing, the mouth becomes full of a bitter taste. The nature of desire is like that. You must try to throw it away, but sincerely. You must not pretend doing it and keep the thing in a corner. In that case it will surely bring misery to you.

9-2-1955

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

KHALED OF THE SEA*

(An Arabian Romance)

PROLOGUE

ALNUMAN AND THE PERI

(Contd. from the last issue)

—so gazed, so laid
AT last upon the white and gleaming maid
The question of his hands. O soft and real
The nakedness he grasped, no marble ideal
Born of the blazing light and infinite air,
A breathing woman with lovely limbs and bare.
Then with a strong melodious voice he cried
And all his cheek was flushed with kingly[1] pride.
"Thou then art mine, after long labour mine,
O earthly body and O soul divine,
After long labour and thy sounding home
Hast left and caverns where thy sisters roam,
O dweller where the austral tempest raves!
O daughter of the wild and beautiful waves!
O breasts of beauty! O shoulder! my delight!
O luminously near! O woman white!
At length I grasp you then and snared at length
The ivory swiftness of thy feet and strength
Of this immortal body shaped for kings,
O memory of sweet and dreadful things!
Ah, welcome to the streets that human tread

* Early writing (January 1899)
[1] royal

Makes musical and joy of human bread
Broken between dry hands and to the sight
Of the untroubled narrow rivers, light
Of lamps and warmth of kindled fires and man.
Fairer shall be thy feet on greensward than
On ocean rocks and O! more bright thy beauty
For human passion and for womanly duty
And softer in my bosom shalt thou sleep
Than lulled by the sublime and monstrous deep.
Much have I laboured; the resplendent face
Of summer I have hated, as the days
Went by and no delightful brook was found
Sprinkling with earth's cool love the ruthless ground,
And in my throat there was a desert's thirst
And on my tongue a fire: I have cursed
The spring and all its flowers; the wrathful cry
Of the wild waters and their cruelty
I have endured, labouring with sail and oar
Through the mad tempest for some human shore
And fought with winds and seen vast Hell aflame.
Down in the nether flood till I became
Blind with the sight of those abysmal graves
And deaf with the eternal sound of waves
And all my heart was broken alone to be
Day after day with the unending sea.
And much on land I have laboured without moan
Or weakening tears making my heart a stone.
But thou art come and I shall hear no more
By inexorable rocks the Ocean roar,
Nor pine in dungeons far from pity or aid.
But in far other prison, seaborn maid,
Thy limbs shall minister to my delight
Even as an ordinary woman's might
And I shall hear thy voice around my heart
Like a cool rivulet and shall not start
To see thee ivory gleaming and all night
Shall feel thee in my arms, O darling white—
With after-joys that spring from these; the face

Of childish loveliness shall light my days,
About my doors the feet of children tread
And little heads with jonquils garlanded,
That often to sweetness win war-hardened eyes
And hearts grown iron their soft masteries
Compel and the light touch of little hands
Bend sworded fingers to their sweet commands.
O bright felicity, labour's dear end,
Into my arms, into my heart descend."
So as he spoke, the silent desert air
Lived with his gladness, and the maiden there
Listened with downcast lids and a soft flush
Upon her like the coming of a blush.
But when he finished and the air was mute,
She laughed with happy lips most like a flute
Or voice of cuckoo in an Indian grove
Waking the heart to vague delightful love.
And with divine eyes gleaming where strange mirth
A smiling mischief was, the living girth
Of her delicious waist she suddenly
Unbound and by the middle lifting high
Betwixt them shook. Hissed the fierce snake and raised
Its jewelled hood for spotted radiance praised,
The jewelled hood to the dread leap intended;
Sad limit of noble life, had that descended.
Since short were his breath and evil, who that pang
Experienced; but before the serpent sprang,
Wrathful, the Arabian seized the glittering neck
And twines of bronze burning with many a fleck
Of coloured fire. His angry grasp to quell
Vainly the formidable folds rebel:
Not all that gordian force and slippery strength
Of coils availed. Inanimate at length
The immense destroyer on the Arabian's wrist
Flung in a ruin loose; and to resist
The wrath of love none now might intervene,
Nor she deny him. Yet with tranquil mien
Smiling she sat and swept with noble gesture

Her hair back that had fallen a purple investure
Over her glowing grace. Strong arms he cast
Around her naked loveliness and fast
Showered kisses on her limbs whose marble white
Grew woman with a soft and rosy light
In each kissed place. "Deemdst thou then" he cried,
"Bright fugitive, lovely wanderer with the tide,
By shaking death before death-practised eyes
My crown to wrest of strenuous enterprise,
Thyself, thyself and beauty? O too sweet
To touch our hard earth with thy faultless feet!
Yet on hard earth must dwell. For on the ground
Thy dreadful guardians who have fenced thee round
Are equalled, and thyself, sweet, though thou shame
The winds with swiftness or like mounting flame
Strive all thy days in my imprisoning arms
Couldst burn thyself no exit. With alarms
Menace and shapes of death, call on the flood
For thy deliverance on these sands to intrude
And lead thee to its jealous waters rude;
But hands that have flung back the swallowing sea
Shall stay and chastise and habituate thee
To yield sweet service due, being my slave
Bought with hard pains from the reluctant wave,
With pain ineffable bought and deep despair
And passion of impracticable care."
So saying he seized his lovely prize and grasping
Her fair soft arm in one hand, the other clasping
Her smooth desirèd thighs, from that rude seat,
The grey sun-blistered boulder most unmeet
To bear her snow-white radiance, lifted. She
As to his home he bore her mightily,
A little strove in his strong arms, but round
Her lithe, reluctant limbs closer he bound
His despot hands and on the saddle set
Never with such sweet rider burdened yet.
Then to his seat he sprang and musical
His cry in that vast silence, wherewithal

He urged his horse, which delicately went
Arching its neck with joy and proud content.
Great were the Arabian's labours; many seas
He had passed and borne impossible miseries
And battled with impracticable ills
O'er uncrossed rivers and forbidden hills,
Till nature fainted. Yet too little was this
To merit all the heaven now made his.
For she, earth's wonder, hard to grasp as fire,
She whom all ocean's secret depths admire,
Laid her delicious cheek to his and flung
Sweet, bare arms on his neck and round him clung:
Her snowy side was his being a part:
Her naked breast burdened his throbbing heart,
And all her hair streamed over him and the whiteness
Of her was in his eyes and her soft brightness
A joy beneath his hands to his embrace
And he was clothed with her as in a dress.
Round them the strong recovered coils were rolled
Of the great snake and with imperious fold
Compelled their limbs together, and by their side
Pacing the tigress checked her dangerous stride.
So rode they like a vision. All the time
She murmured accents as of linkèd rhyme
Musical, in a language like the sea,
Accents of undulating melody.
For sometimes it was like a happy noon
Murmuring with waves and sometimes like the swoon
Of calm, a silence heard, or rich by noise
Of river pouring with their seaward voice
And leaping laughters and sometimes was wild
And passionate as the sobbing of a child.
But often it was like the cold salt spray
On a health-reddened cheek and glad with day
And life and sad with the far-moaning call
Of wind upon the waters funeral.
Not on the lips of man might fashioned be
A language of such wild variety.

Now of that magic tongue no separate word
Was of Alnuman understood or heard,
And yet he knew that of the caves she spoke
Where never earthly light of sunshine woke,
And of unfathomed things beneath the floods
And peopled depths and Ocean solitudes
And mighty creatures of the main and ligh:
Of jewels making a subluminous night
Lower than even the dead may sink; and wall
Of coral and in what majestic halls
The naked sea-born sisters link their dance;
How sometimes on the shores their white limbs glance
In the mysterious moonlight; how they come
To riverbanks far from their secret home;
And last she spoke of mighty Love that reaches
Resistless arms beyond the long sea-beaches
And mocks the barriers of the storm, and how
Pearls unattainable a human brow
Have decked and man, the child of misery,
Been mated with the sisters of the sea.
So on she murmured like a ceaseless song
Making the weary sands a rapture; long
The patient desert round them waits; nor soon
The sun toiled through the endless afternoon:
But they paced always like a marvellous dream,
And dreamlike in the eyes of man might seem
Such magic vision (had human eyes been found
In the sole desert void of sign or bound),—
The horse that feared its dread companion not,
The kingly man with brow of reaching thought
And danger-hardened strength; fair as the morn,
The radiant girl upon his saddle borne,
Naked, a vision not of earth; the fell
Serpent that twined about them, terrible
With burning hues, and the fierce tigress there
Following with noiseless step the godlike pair.
Nor when to Bagdad and its streets they came,
Did any eye behold. Only a name

Was in the ears of the grim warders. Straight
Like engines blind of some overmastering fate
They rose, the mighty bolts they drew; loud jarred
The doors unhearing with deaf iron barred
And groaned upon their road; then backward swung
Whirling and kissed again with clamorous tongue;
Nor in the streets was any step of man,
Before loud wheels no swift torchbearers ran
Setting the night on fire; bright and rare
The garlanded high-shuttered windows, where
Men revelled and sound into the shadows cast:
All else was night and silence where they passed.
So is the beautiful sea-stranger gone
To her new home, who now no more must run
Upon the bounding waves, destined a mortal's bride.
So is the strong Arabian deified
In bliss. Moreover from the wondrous night
When with those small beloved feet grew bright
His lonely house, wealth like a sea swept through
Its doors and as a dwelling of gods it grew
In beauty and brightness. All that thrives
Costly or fragrant upon earth or lives
Of riches in the hoarding ocean lost
And all bright things with gold or gems embossed
By Indian or by Syrian art refined
And all rich cloths and silks with jewels lined
Regal Bokhara weaves or Samarcand,
Increased and gathered to Alnuman's hand
And girls of glorious limb and feature he
Bought for his slaves, of rose and ivory,
Sweet Persians with the honey-hiding mouth
And passionate Arab girls and strong-limbed youth
Of Tartar maidens for his harem doors.
For now not vainly the fair child implores
Of Shaikhor of Emir his love for boon,
But with high marriage-rites some prosperous moon
At last has brought into the marble pride
Of that great house for envy edified.

So in Bagdad the Arabian dwelt nor seemed
Other his life than theirs who never dreamed
Beyond earth's ken, nor made in sun and breeze
Their spirits great with shock of the strong seas,
Nor fortified their hearts with pains sublime
Nor wrestled with the bounds of space and time.
Like common men he lived to whom the ray
Of a new sun but brings another day
Unmeaning, who in their own selves confined
Know not the grandeur which the mightier mind
Inherits when it makes the destinies rude
The chisel by which its marble mass and crude
With God's or hero's likeness is indued.
Yet this was also rumoured that within
The sheath of that calm life he sojourned in
An edge of flaming rapture was, that things
Beyond all transitory imaginings
Came to him secret and vast pleasures more
Than frail humanity had dared to feel before.
Since too much joy man's heart can hardly bear
And all too weak man's narrow senses were
For raptures that eternal spirits attain
In sensuous heavens ignorant of pain.
Yet even such raptures mortal man's could be
Wed with the child of the unbounded sea.

SRI AUROBINDO

HOMAGE TO THE MOTHER*

IT is the Mother's Day, and because it is the Mother's Day, it is also the children's day. We are one in the Mother, and the Mother's Day is our day as well. We cannot easily think of the Mother without the children, nor of the children without the Mother: what is this indeed but an expression of the many uniting in the One, the One scattering as the many? For us children, has there ever been a more soothing word than the Mother? It is the *mantra* that gives us the assurance of food and raiment, love and security.

I have seen an announcement in the papers that today is the Mother's birthday. But are we altogether justified in talking of birth and birthdays in connection with the person, power and personality we know as the Mother? The person we have seen in the Ashram at Pondicherry—the portrait we now see before us—is the Mother. Yet the appearance is one thing, the reality behind may be a very different thing. We say the sun rises, the sun is on the ascendent, the sun sets: how far are these statements correct? We watch the shadows of the night recede, we feel the warmth of the sun, we see the earth tingling with new life and bathed in the morning light, and so we recognize and salute the sun. There are, however, others who perversely shut themselves within, deny the sun, and reject the promise of light and life. But in an absolute sense there is neither sunrise nor sunset, our human ideas are false, our celebrations meaningless. On the one hand, there is the easy human approach, and, on the other, there is the steep road to the immaculate absolute beyond the cloud-capped heights. Let us not deny the lesser truth because there is a greater one also.

We say, again, that the Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was inaugurated on the 12th February. Yet surely it was born much earlier—it was born perhaps when X first entertained the idea, a year or so ago, of turning this house into the Ashram, perhaps it was born earlier still, and perhaps we should really get back to the very beginning of time. We are

* A talk delivered at the Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on the 21st February 1956.

thus obliged to talk on two levels at once, the temporal and the timeless. We have to traffic in appearances, in half-truths, and in approximations; but if we are wise, if we persevere, we can distil from the language of appearance the quintessential truth of the reality underlying the appearance.

How shall we think of the Mother, or tell the story of her life? We may seize certain external 'facts' and telescope them into a sort of biography. A few dates, a few names, a few events: but are *these* the Mother's life? Like Sri Aurobindo's, the Mother's life too has not been on the outside for the world to see, and it must be a travesty to turn a 'WHO IS WHO' entry into the life of a prepotent spiritual power and personality. Shall we then read the *Words of the Mother*, her *Prayers and Meditations*, her *Words of Long Ago* and try to reconstruct her inner life, or follow the movements in her consciousness as it raced from heaven to earth, earth to heaven, seizing and embracing all? I tried this method with indifferent success in my little book, *On the Mother*, but the task exceeded my understanding. It is no 'growth' that we see as we read the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* in a chronological order, but rather a progressive manifestation of the Divine. It is thus misleading at every point to identify the first person singular of the *Prayers and Meditations* with the Mother, the universal, the transcendent force that makes her the Mother.

Or, perhaps, we may read Sri Aurobindo's great miniature study, *The Mother*, and meet in its marvellous pages the Mother in her changing moods and unchanging majesty. Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati—the very names unfold whole universes of meaning, and our ideas and adorations mingle and fuse in the evocation of the supramenta Mahashakti "pouring down her luminous transcendences from their ineffable ether."

Perhaps, again, we may take courage in both hands and launch ourselves upon the nectarean ocean of Sri Aurobindo's immense poem, *Savitri*. It is no doubt, seen from the outside, the story of Satyavan and Savitri; but viewed from the spiritual centre of the poem, it is the story of the Mother, of the spiritual collaboration between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and of the promise of earth's liberation and supramentalisation through their Yogic efforts.

Which, then, is the truth, the whole truth? Who and what is the Mother? Why is she in our midst? What does she want us to do? There are no trite answers to these questions, and the answers need qualifications and need to be adjusted to our own spiritual awareness at a particular point of time and

our own sense of the infinite possibility open to the aspiring soul. Z read a few minutes ago the Message for the day, which is really a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

> For one was there supreme behind the God.
> A Mother Might brooded upon the world;
> A Consciousness revealed its marvellous front
> Transcending all that is, denying none:
> Imperishable above our fallen heads
> He felt a rapturous and unstumbling Force.
> The undying Truth appeared, the enduring Power
> Of all that here is made and then destroyed,
> The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
> Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.

Let us allow the meaning to sink into our souls: a Mother Might...a Consciousness...transcending all...denying none...undying Truth...enduring Power...the Mother of all godheads and all strengths...mediatrix...binds earth to the Supreme. The Mother is Might: in other words, the Mother who is seemingly a person and is undoubtedly a striking personality, is also a Power. She is Power as well as Consciousness—she is the manifestation of the Consciousness-Force that is the Cosmic Shakti, the 'home-of-all, womb-of-all' created things and beings, and so she includes all and also exceeds all, she is all the children and she is the Mother of the children too. All things pass and change, but this Light, the Power, is beyond obscuration or change. And, finally, the Mother is the mediatrix who binds earth to the Supreme.

We of the earth—earthy and of the earth—are a prey to viperous fears and perplexities. So long as we are contented to live unthinkingly, we live anyhow, somehow,—and truce to our fears and perplexities! But once start thinking, a feeling of isolation creeps upon us, we sense suffering and frustration and pain, and we grow more and more conscious of death. Even when surrounded by friends, even in the bosom of the family, we are not less alone than when we are really alone. We are out of harmony with our surroundings. We are ill at ease in company. We can neither entertain ourselves nor interest others. Pain, suffering, frustration smite us at different levels, and the shafts come from different directions. And the phenomenal world of birth, growth, decay and death seems to emphasise the message of Death alone with a particular insistence. Can it be that Death is all that

there is, that the world is no more than Death's visible Kingdom? How shall we escape these viperous fears and perplexities, how shall we pierce through this wall of isolation, how chase away the host of evil desires and painful experiences, how face and overcome Death? Sapless, savourless, rootless,—that is what we feel our lives to be. How shall we strike roots into the earth again, how stimulate the stir of new life, how reawaken the chords of the harmony we have lost?

From different quarters the same cry is wrung from agonised hearts and the perplexity finds espression in poem, drama or novel. Edwin Muir sees the human situation as a labyrinth, the saving clue of spirituality still eluding our grasp. In his latest play, *The Confidential Clerk*, T.S. Eliot has jumbled together children in search of parents and parents in search of children, and both parents and children in search of the vocations that alone will fill their lives with purpose and joy. William Faulkner, a Nobel Laureate like Eliot, has presented in his mature work, *A Fable*, a son who is a rebel Corporal confronting his natural father, the General, and vainly attempting purposeful understanding. Everywhere thinking minds wrestle with this problem of the 'lost' trying to establish bridgeheads across the seas of frustration, and so get to the 'other' side: to get back to the fountains of our true origins, to slake in those wells of living waters their thirst for felicity and knowledge and immortality.

It is in this context of man's excruciating experience of isolation, frustration and death, his sense of rootlessness and saplessness, his feeling of failure to rediscover his origins, to send out creepers of understanding towards what he is divorced from, to strike the chords of a new harmony embracing the temporal and the eternal,—it is in this context that the discipline of Yoga assumes its cardinal role, for Yoga is really a reaching out towards the hidden Reality and tearing asunder the veil of Maya. Said the Master: "There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers." For us when our faith doesn't fail us, when our aspiration is stainless, the process reduces itself to our looking up to the Mother with loving trust and the Mother meeting our gaze with a smile of recognition that is also the sanction of our spiritual regeneration. It is burden of the Mother's destiny to awaken in us the unity and largeness that we have lost, the joy we have forgotten, the life everlasting—the Life Divine—which we have come to deny because of the Death we have known. Being the

Mother, she alone can give us the assurance that we are not orphans, that we are not alone, and that we are not condemned to suffering or death. The earth is no gas chamber, we aren't the 'lost' aliens in a concentration camp. Could our eyes be opened by the Mother's grace, all will be seen bathed in the light of heaven, and freedom, joy and love will cease to be truants on earth. Mediatrix, the source of all godheads and all strengths, the Mother verily binds earth to the Supreme.

More than one contemporary Western writer sees in the power of Grace the sole hope of undoing the giant maladies of our age that infect and distort the human soul. In the novels of François Maurice and Graham Greene, for example, Grace plays a decisive, if also elusive, part in the rout of evil and the salvaging of the nearly lost soul. To be oppressed by the sense of one's paramount unworthiness, to apotheosise one's accomplishment of evil, to give way to the negation of spiritual despair, is not the sensible approach to evil. Whatever the past budget of commissions and omissions and evasions, if the call today is sincere and urgent, the response will be unfailing and immediate. The Mother is indeed Mother Might—she is all the mothers, and the godheads and strengths—and while we love her and look up to her, let us also ask ourselves now and then what sort of children we are, or have turned out to be: how blind or purblind, how wilful or perverse, how foolish or vain. Yet the Mother's love is not denied even to us,—the most indifferent, the most obstreperous included—nor is the promise of liberation withheld from us. The meddling, muddling instruments of analytical reason and enervating doubt cloud our vision, and even when we see we deny what we see, and even as the light pours down from above we turn our eyes away. But even so we are not altogether lost, for the Mother's power must prevail in the end, and our errant lives and this sullied earth must receive and retain once and for all Truth and Light and Life Divine and the Ananda of the immortal gods.

Such is the Word from the Mother to her children, and may we take heart from it and fare forward towards our Goal.

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

THE MOTHER'S TEACHINGS

(1)

"LET this be our one need in life, to realise the Divine." *

The philosopher has the quiet joy of his speculation and reflection, the poet the ecstasy of his vision and its rhythmic expression, the scientist the wonder and delight of his exploration and discovery, but the Mother's sole joy and delight in life is to lead her children to the Divine, tot he essential and ultimate Truth of their existence, to the one blissful Reality, infinite and eternal, behind all this shifting pageant of transitory forms.

"Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and unhoped for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath....

"Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime Presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial powers can equal this wonderful gift?[1]

The Mother could not bear that her beloved children, her own self in myriad forms of flesh and blood, should remain engulfed in the darkness of ignorance, stung by desires, seduced by shadows, struggling and stumbling in their blind pursuit of fleeting phantoms, and suffering interminable agonies.

"I turn towards Thee and salute Thee, O Liberator of the worlds, and, identified with Thy divine love, I contemplate the earth and its creatures, this mass of substance put into forms perpetually destroyed and

* The Words of the Mother.

[1] Prayers and Meditations of the Mother—March 31, 1917.

renewed, this swarming mass of aggregates which are dissolved as soon as constituted, of beings who imagine that they are conscient and permanent individualities and who are as ephemeral as a breath, always alike or almost the same in their diversity, repeating indefinitely the same desires, the same tendencies, the same appetites, the same ignorant errors.

But from time to time Thy sublime light shines in a being and radiates through him over the world, and then a little wisdom, a little knowledge, a little disinterested faith, heroism and compassion penetrate men's hearts, transform their minds and set free a few elements from that sorrowful and implacable wheel of existence to which their blind ignorance subjects them."[1]

The Mother could not bear that, carrying the Divine in themselves, and the Divine's infinite power and bliss, her children should drift and wail in the wilderness of the world, as if they were waifs and strays on a tossing sea.

"How painful and miserable seems to me their life of ignorance and obscurity, their life of foolish agitation and profitless dissipation, when a single spark of Thy sublime light, a single drop of Thy divine love can transform this suffering into an ocean of joy!"[2]

She could not bear that her children should live any more, separated from the Divine, entrenched in their paltry, pitiful egos, the source of all limitation and suffering, and torn by ceaseless conflicts within them and without, forfeiting the peace and harmony of universal unity.

"What a formidable and, at the same time, divinely sweet puissance would be needed to turn aside all these wills from the bitter struggle for their selfish, mean and foolish satisfactions, to snatch them from this vortex which hides death behind its treacherous glitter, and turn them towards Thy conquering harmony!"[3]

Distressed by the suffering of her children, the Mother united herself with the divine universal Mother, and they both turned to the Unthinkable

[1] Prayers and Meditations of the Mother—February 1, 1914
[2] Ibid—November 29, 1913
[3] Ibid—February 1, 1914

Supreme, so that, delivered from darkness and suffering, the earth might realise her destiny of divine fulfilment.

"And when in our infinite love "we" perceived in its entirety the hideous suffering of the world of misery and ignorance, when "we" saw our children locked in a sombre struggle, flung upon each other by energies that had deviated from their true aim, "we" willed ardently that the light of Divine Love should be made manifest, a transfiguring force at the centre of these distracted elements....Then, that the Will might be yet more powerful and effective, "we" turned towards Thee, O Unthinkable Supreme, and "we" implored Thy aid. And from the unsounded depths of the Unknown a reply came, sublime and formidable, and "we" knew that the earth was saved."[1]

But what is it that the Mother means when she says, "Let this be our one need in life, to realise the Divine"? Does she mean what the traditional guides on the spiritual path have meant throughout the ages? Does she swell the chorus of the countless mystics and saints that, not in this life but beyond, lies the goal of life—in some Nirvāna or Moksha, Vaikuntha or Brahmaloka? That might be a sublime teaching, indeed, and supremely acceptable, because familiar, to the religious mind of humanity. But that is not what the Mother means by "realising the Divine". To realise is to make real, to have a constant and concrete experience of the divine union and communion, of God's beatific Presence of Love and Power and dynamic Will in one's whole being, even in the body, and at every moment and in every movement of one's life. To feel the divine union in the depths and lose it on the surface of the being, to be identified with the Brahman in samadhi and separated from It in the waking, active state, is not to realise the Divine, in the comprehensive sense the Mother uses the expression. The Divine must become real to man's physical personality in the same way—constantly and concretely—as the world of sense is real to it. But that is not possible so long as Matter has not been impregnated with the Divine Presence through and through, and the waking, active, physical consciousness of man has not been illumined and transformed enough to surrender to its direct guidance. The Mother's next great teaching, therefore, runs:

[1] Prayers and Meditations of the Mother—September 1, 1914

"The goal is not to lose oneself in the Divine Consciousness. The goal is to let the Divine Consciousness penetrate into Matter and transform it."[1]

The whole spiritual life of man assumes a new aspect in the light of this teaching. Kaivalya, Nirvana, Moksha, Laya— all cease to be the ultimate goal. Life, which has been always regarded as a snare or a nightmare, an illusion, a mysterious, timeless flux, or a mere vaulting board for an irrevocable plunge in the Ineffable, puts on a new significance, and beckons to the human soul to cultivate it as the only field for the highest divine perfection. The descent of the human soul into this material world, its involution in the Ignorance, its subsequent awakening and emancipation, not only betray a teleological purpose, but reveal the purpose to be the crowning glory of human life—a perfect manifestation of God in humanity. Many an obstinate problem of religion and philosophy is luminously solved by this teaching of the Mother, which makes it abundantly clear that the soul has come down into the world with a definite mission—it is to manifest in material life the infinite glory of the Divine who dwells in it. And its perpetual wandering through birth and death is not a futile dissipation of its energies, but a progressive and elaborate process of preparation of its instrumental nature, its mind, life and body. For, until mind, life and body are radically delivered from the obscuring and torturing yoke of the Inconscience and the Ignorance from which they have evolved, there can be no harmony and creative perfection in the self-expression of the Divine in the material world. Liberation of the soul remains none the less indispensable, but it ceases to be the final consummation of the spiritual life. It becomes, instead, the first decisive step towards a much greater, a more glorious perfection—liberation, transformation and divine utilisation of the whole instrumental nature of the liberated soul for a plenary manifestation of God in Matter.

Momentous consequences of a fundamental nature inevitably follow from this new teaching. Where there was only the unilateral movement of the inmost consciousness of man towards the Transcendent Consciousness, entailing its gradual detachment and withdrawal from the normal round of life's activities, there has now arisen the possibility—Sri Aurobindo would say, the inevitability—of the collateral movement of the Transcendent

[1] The Words of the Mother.

Consciousness descending into the human consciousness and transforming it into its own image. Life, which was spurned as a snare or a prison comes now to be embraced as a nursery of the evolving soul and the only field and condition for its perfection and fulfilment. The ideal of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon earth glimmers no more in the haze of a half-forgotten dream or is regarded no longer as a chimera of utopian idealism, but appears as the inevitable, logical result of the "penetration of the Divine Consciousness into Matter". This teaching inaugurates the long looked-for Satya Yuga, the age of gold, which, if the hoary tradition of the Hindus is to be believed, is to follow in the wake of the age of iron, the Kali Yuga. When the soul of man withdraws from the world, the world sinks into spiritual darkness, though mentally it may yet make a great headway; but when the liberated souls return upon the world, trailing the splendour of the Divine, the world rises into and reveals divine Glory. The Mother's teaching is a message of hope and certitude to mankind in the present crisis of its spiritual life, and, instinct with the yogic dynamic, it is the sole, unfailing means of realising the new ideal. It is an attested fact that whenever a crucial step has been taken in the evolution of humanity and a new age has dawned upon earth, it has invariably been heralded by harbinger voices of wisdom and prepared by pioneer hands of power. Those who have faith in the embodiments of the Divine Grace that come down from age to age, yuge yuge, for the rehabilitation of Dharma, dharma sangsthāpanārthāya, hail them with joy and, following the path they blaze, help in their great work; the rest of mankind remain either indifferent or distrustful till the concrete events of the changing world unseal their eyes and compel belief. Truth always emerges triumphant even out of the darkest clouds of disbelief and denial, and man has the inveterate habit of stumbling along the paths chalked out by those very hands whose proferred guidance they had the folly to refuse at first with derision or disdain.

The means by which we can let "the Divine Consciousness penetrate into Matter and transform it" is what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo call the Integral Yoga. Dwelling upon the theory and practice of this Yoga, the Mother says:

"In the integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent. You cannot say, 'When I am medi-

tating, reading philosophy or listening to these conversations, I will be in this condition of an opening towards the Light and a call for it, but when I go out to walk or see friends I can allow myself to forget all about it.' To persist in this attitude means that you will remain untransformed and never have the true union; always you will be divided; you will have at best only glimpses of this greater life. For although certain experiences and realisations may come to you in meditation or in your inner consciousness, your body and your outer life will remain unchanged. An inner illumination that does not take any note of the body and the outer life, is of no great use; for it leaves the world as it is. That is what has constantly happened till now. Even those who had a very great and powerful realisation withdrew from the world to live undisturbed in inner quiet and peace; the world was left to its ways, and misery and stupidity, Death and Ignorance continued, unaffected, their reign on this material plane of existence. For those who thus withdraw, it may be pleasant to escape from this turmoil, to run away from the difficulty and to find for themselves a happy condition elsewhere; but they leave the world and life uncorrected and untransformed; and their own outer consciousness too they leave unchanged and their bodies as unregenerate as ever. Coming back to the physical world, they are likely to be worse there than even ordinary people; for they have lost the mastery over material things, and their dealing with physical life is likely to be slovenly and helpless in its movements and at the mercy of every passing force.

An ideal of this kind may be good for those who want it, but it is not our Yoga. *For we want the divine conquest of this world, the conquest of all its movements and the realisation of the Divine here.* But if we want the Divine to reign here we must give all we have and are and do here to the Divine. It will not do to think that anything is unimportant or that the external life and its necessities are no part of the divine life. If we do, we shall remain where we have always been and there will be no conquest of the external world; nothing abiding there will have been done."[1]

In these words the Mother gives us a clear and ample enough exposition of the aim and method of the integral spirituality she represents and teaches. "An inner illumination that does not take any note of the body and the outer life, is of no great use", "We want the divine conquest of the world, the

[1] The Words of the Mother.

conquest of all its movements and the realisation of the Divine here," "It will not do to think that anything is unimportant or that the external life and its necessities are no part of the divine life"—these are the key elements of the Mother's ideal, which, it will be easily seen, is quite different from what is followed in the traditional forms of Yoga. It is different from the modern brands of Yoga which are leavened with altruistic and humanitarian activism. It is not a mere combination of Mary and Martha, so much extolled in Western mysticism. Its insistence on action does not necessarily affiliate it to any of the current Karma Yogas, ancient or modern. If we go behind the superficial resemblances, we shall discover that it is based on a new and most comprehensive conception of spirituality, an original conception of life envisaged from the standpoint of evolution, and a revolutionary vision of the destiny of mankind. It is not a repudiation of any of the ancient paths of Yoga, except that of exclusive otherworldliness, but a synthesis of them all crowned with the gospel of a supreme dynamic, divine perfection.

This ideal of "letting the Divine Consciousness penetrate into Matter and transform it" inserts a new spiritual value into the cultural heritage of humanity. It opens up infinite vistas of human perfection and pushes far back the frontiers of culture and civilisation. It will be foolhardy to speculate upon the benefits that will result from its realisation, for the ways of the Infinite are mysterious and unpredictable, and the comprehension of man is all too narrow and limited. But this much at least is certain that the Divine Consciousness, once it penetrates into and transforms our material life, will not leave things as they are. Its light and bliss, its peace and harmony will surely spell the end of earths' darkness and suffering, disorder and discord.

We shall now proceed to a consideration of the actual nature of the spiritual perfection the Mother has put before mankind as its goal, the means of realising it and its bearing upon the general development of the human race.

(To be continued)

RISHABHCHAND

SRI AUROBINDO*

I

OF all the Indians who have recently contributed to the moulding of man's higher values in the modern world, apart from politicians, none is less known to Englishmen than Sri Aurobindo. Yet, of all the Indians who have been writers or leaders, none had the benefit of being brought up entirely in the best English tradition and none dived deeper into the profundities of Indian spirituality.

Born on August 15th 1872, he was brought to England as a child. He became in his life the great philosopher-yogi ranking in spiritual attainment with giants like Ramakrishna Parama Hansa and Raman Maharshi who had an entirely Indian background. Yet, this great leader of men wrote only in English and has given an epic "Savitri" to the English language.

His father, Dr. K. D. Ghose had his medical training in Edinburgh and became so enamoured of the English way of life that he decided to bring up his children in the English tradition. He employed an English governess, Miss Pagett, for his child in Calcutta so that he might grow up in complete ignorance of the Indian language, social forms, tradition and religion.

In 1879 he brought his three sons to England and left the youngest, Aurobindo, aged 7, with the Rev. William Drewett, a Congregational Minister in Manchester, where he remained from 1879 to 1884.

Aurobindo did not attend any school in Manchester, but he was taught Latin, the elements of history, geography, arithmetic, English etc., at home by the Drewetts—husband and wife. At an early age he read English poetry and wrote verses for the Fox Family Magazine! In 1881 Mr. Drewett resigned his Church and, emigrated to Australia leaving young Aurobindo in charge of one, Mr. Acroyd, whose name appears with Sri Aurobindo's in the Register of St. Paul's School as "Arabinda Acroyd Ghose"!!

From Manchester he was taken to London and admitted to St. Paul's School in October 1884. The famous Dr. Walker was then High Master and took a personal interest in him, coaching him in Greek. He proved

* Broadcast from the B.B.C. London, in December 1955.

a very promising student and won an open Scholarship in Classics to King's College, Cambridge.

While at St. Paul's, life was hard for the young scholar because remittances from his father had become irregular for some years. He also had difficulty in finding lodgings and it was an Englishman who helped him to stay in the office of the city Liberal Club and continue his studies.

This benefactor was James Cotton who was born at Coonoor in India and who took a personal interest in these young Indian boys and provided the eldest with some work in the office of the Club, thus enabling him to live on the premises. This James Cotton was brother of Sir Henry Cotton who was among the pioneers of the Indian National Congress. In the office of the Club there were no heating arrangements and young Aurobindo suffered much in winter. He had not even an overcoat: sometimes he went short of food.

But no privations interfered with his thirst for knowledge, nor was he driven to seek a life of material success and comfort. Towards the end of his school career, Sri Aurobindo gave more attention to general extra-curricular reading—literature, fiction, poetry, etc. He also studied French, German, Italian and Spanish and spent much time writing poetry.

II

At Cambridge from 1890-1892 he was mainly occupied with the study of the Classics, with writing Poetry, and with the question of Indian Freedom. In 1892 he took a First Class in the Classical Tripos Part I, and obtained prizes in Greek and Latin poetry. He was selected for the Indian Civil Service, again securing record marks in Classics. However, he did not take his degree—as it meant spending two years longer at the University, and not wishing to go through the routine of the I.C.S. he absented himself from the riding test and consequently was not selected for active service.

One of the reasons for his attitude towards the I.C.S. may have been his participation in the newly formed "Majlis", and association of Indian students at Cambridge, in which, on several occasions, he advocated in very strong terms the cause of Indian independence. In fact, this was an indication of one of the major trends of his future career.

Writing poetry was another preoccupation. He had taught himself sufficient German and Italian to read Goethe and Dante in the original.

His first collection of poems, "Songs to Myrtilla" was published at Baroda in 1895. It was Laurence Binyon, then a student, who read them at Cambridge and pressed him to print them.

When he had finished his studies at King's the question of employmen became acute. It was again Mr. James Cotton who introduced him to the late Gaekwar of Baroda then in London. As a result of the introduction Sri Aurobindo joined the service of the Baroda state as the professor of English and French.

III

Sri Aurobindo was in Baroda from 1893 to 1905. Almost immediately on his return to India his interest in Indian politics showed itself in a series of articles in which he attacked in very strong terms the moderate policy of the Congress. He emphasised the inalienable right of Indians to freedom, and in place of the moderate policy of prayer, petition and protest he advocated the virile policy of self-reliance, sacrifice and organisation. He asked Congress to bring in the masses to support the movement of freedom. During every vacation in the College he visited Bengal, studied the political atmosphere and started revolutionary groups of young men in several districts.

The years in Baroda were not only full of formative but creative activity. He studied Indian Culture and several Indian languages with the same avidity and zeal with which he had studied Greek and Latin and European culture in England. He wrote poems, some of which were later published as "Ahana and other poems."

As a professor he was the idol of the studnets. When he came back from Surat to Baroda in 1907 from the historic session of Congress the students unyoked the horses of his carriage and pulled it to his house.

In 1906 he resigned his post in the Baroda State which was a lucrative and promising one and in answer to the call of "Mother India", and went to Calcutta as the Principal of the newly-started national College, on a mere subsistence basis.

IV

Actually twelve years from 1898 to 1910 was the period of Sri Aurobindo's political activity, including the vacations from 1893; but for the first six years he worked from behind the scenes. Only after 1904 he began to come out openly and in 1906 he became a recognised leader when the

agitation against Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal created a political storm in India. The poet and the professor became a flaming patriot and national leader.

Apart from his participation in Congress he edited a national daily and weekly journal—"Bande Mataram" from 1906 to 1908, which gave to the Nationalist movement its philosophy and raised politics to the plane of spirituality. He naturally came up against the administration of Lord Minto and was charged with sedition but acquitted by the court. A second time he was implicated in the historic Alipore bomb-case but at the end of a long drawn out trial he was again acquitted. As sometimes happens in life, there was strangely a dramatic irony in the situation since Mr. Charles Beachcroft who was second to Sri Aurobindo in Classics in the I.C.S. at Cambridge, was the Sessions Judge and Sri Aurobindo was the accused.

It was then that Tagore wrote that famous poem:

"O Aurobindo! accept the salutation of Rabindra" and called him: "The Voice incarnate of the Soul of India."

His political work though short in duration made a lasting contribution to the political ideology of India at a most critical time of her history. His wide study of European history, his keen and comprehensive mind, his unrivalled mastery of English and above all his utter sincerity and readiness to sacrifice are now matters of Indian political history. It was he who, along with Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal, first advocated the policy of passive resistance, Swadeshi and boycott, together with the constructive programme of national education and arbitration courts. He wrote a series of seven articles on Passive Resistance in 1907, declaring 40 years ago: "India awakes not for herself but for humanity."

Though he approved of Revolutionary activity as a right of the suppressed nation, his mind turned away from it from 1914; for, he knew that India would be free without violence. He told this to me in December 1918! when Indian freedom was not visible even on the distant political horizon: "You can take it from me it is as certain as the rising of the sun tomorrow."

Sri Aurobindo fully represented not only the nationalist mind of India but based his political philosophy on the true spirit of Indian culture which always stresses, and relies more upon moral and spiritual forces than upon outer aids and material means. It was by stressing those inner spiritual forces of man and activating them that India has brought some of the elements of her culture to the forefornt of international life to-day.

V

During the year of detention under trial, Sri Aurobindo found time to resume the practice of inner discipline—called yoga—for which he was longing but which his political preoccupation had prevented him from pursuing. Yoga is an inner and conscious effort at spiritual growth. It can be a very natural and normal process.

This inner discipline, consisting of definite psychological practices, gave him a very concrete spiritual experience, an illumination,—in which in his cell in jail and even in the court of trial, he experienced the Omnipresent Reality as the basic truth of the individual and the cosmos. He gave public utterance to this experience in 1909, on his release, in the famous speech delivered at Uttarpara, a suburb of Calcutta. It is interesting to mention that the Government of India have now kept this cell as a historical monument.

This spiritual Illumination was another turning point in Sri Aurobindo's life. The experience gripped him and he cut himself off from politics and retired first to the French town of Chandernagore and ultimately settled at Pondicherry in the South where he remained from 1910 till his death in 1950.

But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in life. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his yoga is not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, lent also to take all life and all world activity into the scope of this Spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action, for it is part of the experience of those who have advanced in yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in the spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess, or possessing, to use it, and this power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which Sri Aurobindo used at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces.

Twice he went out of his way and found it necessary to make public pronouncements on important world issues which shows distinctly that renunciation of life is not a part of his yoga. Fisrt, during the second world war when Paris fell he declared himself openly on the side of the Allies and made financial contribution in answer to appeal for funds; second time, he pleaded for the acceptance of Sir Stafford Cripps' offer by the Indian National Congress.

He wanted to discover whether this experience of the Omnipresent Reality could be made—by training—the normal part of man's consciousness. And if it could be so made, he wanted to work out the psychological result,—the transformation,—that would follow in the life of the individual and of the group. To him this Illumination was at once the revelation of man's destiny on earth and its attainment the one key to the solution of man's problems.

From 1914 to 1920, he conducted a monthly magazine in which he published the results of his experience, experiments, meditation and thought. He arrived at what he called "a grand synthesis of human knowledge." All his great works: *The Life Divine; The Synthesis of Yoga; Ideal of Human Unity; Human Cycle; Future Poetry* and original interpretations of Indian lore—the Veda, Upanishad and Gita—were published serially in this monthly. It was with reference to his metaphysical masterpiece, *The Life Divine*, that the late Sir Francis Younghusband acclaimed him as the greatest contributor to contemporary philosophy after Bergson."

This contribution to English literature, though insufficiently known to the intelligentia in England, deserves study and consideration; for, he brings to his synthesis a unique detachment towards both East and West. He brings to Indian culture the rich gifts of his European training,—his emphasis on the acceptance of Life in any scheme of spiritual regeneration of man and the importance of collective life, the need for outer perfection and organisation coupled with spiritual realisation and ascent to higher levels of consciousness. To the West, he brings the true spiritual basis of reconstruction of individual and collective life, by insisting and proving that man's problem is mainly inner and psychological and can therefore be solved only by bringing about an inner change in man's nature, by rising to a higher level of consciousness beyond intellect.

In his *Life Divine* he shows that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self but divided by a certain

separativeness of consciousness. It is possible to remove this veil of separative consciousness by a certain psychological discipline and become aware of the True Self, the Divinity within us and all.

This One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and higher and enlarge towards a greater and greater perfection. Evolution begins with Matter, goes up to Life and has reached Mind. This evolution is not a linear progression, it is emergent,—each phase revealing altogether new powers not found in the last one—e.g. Life has characteristics different from Matter, Mind has powers that mere Life has not. Man is the representative of this mental consciousness. But evolution has not come to its end, man is not, and is not intended to be, its final product. Man is a transitional being, he has to exceed his present mental consciousness and reach the higher level of Truth-consciousness, which, though supraconscient to him at present, is potential to him and attainable. In his reading of man's future, Sri Aurobindo is the seer of the new age.

The basis of all experience is Consciousness; Consciousness therefore is the fundamental fact of existence. This Consciousness, as seen in man, is capable of ascent and enlargement—it is not confined to one (horizontal) plane but is multi-dimensional. If in our modern outlook we accept and work out the unlimited possibilities of Matter and energy there is no reason to limit the potentiality of Life and Mind and human spirit.

He shows that the ultimate Reality from which creation flows is neither a void, or zero or a contentless remote Absolute or an anthropomorphic God—unconnected with the cosmos. Rather, it is the Omnipresent Reality immanent in the Cosmos,—a dynamic divine Reality,—if one may say, —a Mother-Consciousness as much as a Father Consciousness—that holds this creation to its bosom. It is the sustaining power of the Divine that keeps the universe going so that one day man may realise on earth his divine destiny.

From 1926 Sri Aurobindo, in response to some people's demands started the Ashram at Pondicherry with a view to realising the goal of divine life on earth. It has now an International University attached to it to which people come from all over the world including English and Europeans.

He wrote two volumes of *Collected Poems* and an epic, *Savitri* extending to 27000 lines. Throughout his long life, he retained his unflagging seeking for knowledge, his thirst for freedom and will to perfection, and never

hesitated to sacrifice material prospects to attain progress. He preached and lived the freedom of man, the unity of mankind and the Divinity of man.

He represents the type of transformed humanity of the future—and in that sense to the founder and precursor of divine race of men.

A. B. PURANI

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE UPANISHADS

TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

SRI AUROBINDO has not written a commentary on the Taittiriya Upanishad. But in a sense a good deal in his Philosophy and Teaching is a development and an elaboration of the truths that are adumbrated in this ancient text. The comprehensive vision of the Upanishad embracing the entire creation in its several grades of becoming out of the One Being of Brahman, the perception of the divine Principle of Ananda as the origin, motive-force and goal of all manifestation, the all-inclusive nature of the discipline it expounds for the realisation of this truth of Life and God—all these go naturally into the framework of the Master's Teaching which affirms the truth and high purpose of this multi-tiered creation issued out of the One Omnipresent Reality and shows the effective way to arrive at its integral Fulfilment.

The Taittiriya[1] Upanishad forms part of the Aranyaka of the Taittiriya or the Krishna (Black) Yajurveda. The VII, VIII and IX Prapathakas (chapters) of the Taittiriya Aranyaka constitute the three sections of the Upanishad, the *Śikṣāvalli*, *Ānandavalli* and the *Bhṛguvalli*.[2] This Upanishad, it may be added, is the most popular text for purposes of chanting

[1] The Vishnu Purana narrates (III.5) an interesting story behind the appellation Taittiriya. Vaishampayana, disciple of Vyasa, had to perform an expiatory ceremony for a lapse in absenting himself from a Council of Elders on Mount Meru. He commissioned his disciples to perform the ceremony. Yajnavalkya, one of them, boastfully offered to do what was necessary all by himself and belittled his co-disciples. Vaishampayana was offended and ordered Yajnavalkya to return all that he had received from him. Yajnavalkya gave back all including his most precious gift, the Yajurveda. And this Veda, it is said, he disgorged concretely and it was picked up by the other disciples taking the form of *tittiri* birds, partridges. That is how this Veda came to be known as the Taittiriya Samhita.

The story goes on to narrate how Yajnavalkya, brave spirit that he was, proceeded to do penance and invoked the Sun who appeared to him in the form of a Horse, *vāja*, and gave him the same Veda (though differently constituted) which got the name *vājasaneyi samhitā*; the one unique feature of this collection being that unlike the Tattiriya, it has no Brahmana attached to the Mantra Samhita but has an Upanishad instead.

[2] The X, the last Prapathaka of the Aranyaka forms a separate Upanishad, the Mahanarayana Upanishad.

wherever Vedic recitation is still in vogue. The poetic prose of the Upanishad, with its short crisp sentences, its happy refrains, has a peculiarly sonorous melody which creates an arresting atmosphere.

It is to be noted that unlike the two Upanishads dealt with earlier[1], the Taittiriya is not a compact text with a developing sequence. Certain chapters are so abrupt and disjointed in their subject-matter that some scholars even doubt whether it is not simply a collection of floating sayings and lessons. In our survey of this Upanishad we shall take note only of its more significant and major topics with a view to present its main teaching —of which, however, there can be no mistaking—in the light of Sri Aurobindo's thought.

The text opens with a Chant of Peace to the Gods, the Cosmic Powers who mould the destinies of men and worlds:

Hari Om. Be peace to us Mitra. Be peace to us Varuna. Be peace to us Aryaman. Be peace to us Indra and Brihaspati. May far-striding Vishnu be peace to us. Adoration to thee, O Vayu. Thou, thou art the visible Eternal and as the visible Eternal I will declare thee. I will declare Righteousness! I will declare Truth! May that protect me! May that protect the speaker! Yea, may it protect me! May it protect the speaker! Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!

This is an invocation taken from a Hymn to the Vishwadevas (All-Gods) in the Rig-veda.[2] In the Veda, each of the Gods has a specific purpose to fulfil in the cosmic scheme of which they are collectively the presiding functionaries. They not only manifest but are also themselves manifest in the universe to urge and lead it towards the Beatitude which is its supreme culmination. They play a decisive part in the journey of man onwards and upwards, in his outer and inner life. And for a self-fulfilment *within* the universe—not outside of it—as taught in this Upanishad, the active presence and contributory cooperation of these cosmic deities is indispensable. Thus Mitra is the God who promotes harmony (as much among the different parts of man's being as between him and others—men and gods), Varuna the God of Purity and Vastness, the keeper of the Law of Truth, Aryaman a leading Personality manifesting the Consciousness-Force of the Sun-God who symbolises the Supreme Truth, Brihaspati the Deity presiding over the Potent Word, the Power of Creative

[1] The *Iṣa* and the *Kena*
[2] I.90-9

Speech, Indra the lord of the Divine Mind, Vishnu the All-pervader—striding across with his celebrated three steps—, sustaining the Creation, and Vayu the God of Life-force which palpably pervades and enlivens all existence. To all of these who have it in their power to build and shape the Realisation,[1] the seer offers his homage and prays for their benediction; he prays thrice—for a threefold protection and blessing, bearing on the welfare of the body, of the soul, of his dealings with the universal powers, *ādhibhautika*, *ādhyātmika* and *ādhidaivika*, as the commentators say, or for the weal and progress of his threefold being, the physical, the life and the mental.

The object of this Upanishad, as indeed of all others, is to lead the aspirant to the Knowledge of Brahman. But before initiation into the mysteries of the High Science, the seeker had to be given a certain preliminary training in cultivating the right modes of thought, articulation and speech. The Wisdom of the ancients was embedded—as far as may be—in their inspired Word. And to evocate its living sense and power, one had to reproduce the exact sound-form in which the Word was manifest to the audience of the Seer who first received it. Each word-content had its natural sound-value or counterpart and the full meaning and power of the word could be realised or brought forth only by an exact reproduction of these sound-vibrations.[2] And hence the seers attached a particular importance to *Śikṣā*, "the syllable, the accent, pitch and effort, even tone and continuity"[3] the elements that go to form enunciation.

[1] Certainly the Gods do not hinder man in his progress. At any rate not the Gods of the Vedic (or Upanishadic) pantheon. They are his allies, friends. "Children of Light, Sons of the Infinite, they recognise in the soul of man their brother and ally and desire to help and increase him by themselves increasing in him so as to possess his world with their light, strength and beauty. The Gods call man to a divine companionship and alliance; they attract and uplift him to their luminous fraternity, invite his aid and offer theirs against the Sons of Darkness and Division." (Sri Aurobindo) It is the fallen gods, the Asuras and their brood who bar the way and seek to prevent the human soul from increasing towards Light and Knowledge and it is from their hold that man is to struggle out with the vigilant help of the Gods. The belief that Gods treat man as their rival and are interested in suppressing him in Ignorance is too anthropomorphic to merit scrutiny.

[2] The Taittiriya Samhita narrates, for instance (II.4-12), the story of Twashtri the celestial architect, whose son was killed by Indra. He desired to produce an avenger of his son and performed the appropriate austerities. But instead of uttering the word *Indrasatru* with the *udatta* accent on the last syllable he accented the first syllable with the fatal result that there appeared not one who was to slay Indra but he whose slayer was to be Indra!

[3] वर्णः स्वरः। मात्रा बलम्। साम सन्तानः। (Taittiriya Up. I. 2)

The mind is to be trained to perceive and conceive newly. Behind the multitudinous variety of forms which people this universe, one must begin to see that there is one underlying Reality which manifests as the many and governs them in an indissoluble unity. Whatever the categories or the terms of the manifestation, they are all interlinked and interdependent. Look at the worlds. The earth below and heaven above are not disparate entities; they are formations of the same Substance of Being though of different grades. The ether—also another form of Substance—links them both and air, its less subtle condition is the joint of their linking. Look at the Shining Fires. The Fire on the earth, the Sun in the sky are forms of the same Consciousness-Energy they are linked by the Waters (of consciousness) and the electricity form of energy is the joint of their linking. Similarly with regard to other categories. There is one Principle, one Term of the Sole Being which manifests in several forms—all mutually forming one connected Whole. One must meditate upon this truth in the creation around and let it naturally govern his inlook and outlook.

To prepare and equip the seeker in these ways of Knowledge, the Teacher should be one who has already realised and holds in himself the truth of what is to be taught. His mind must be illumined by the pure light of the Knowledge he is to radiate, his very body must become a pouring vessel for the riches of Knowledge, Power and Immortality that flow naturally from the heights of God-realisation. Towards this end, to establish and confirm this high state in himself the Guru invokes the Lord of the Gods at the summit of this triple World, Indra the Master of the Divine Mind who presides over the altitudes of the purified mental consciousness and who alone can open up for man the splendours of illumined Knowledge and Power. To him he prays:

He who is the Bull of the Vedas of the universal form, he who was born in the sacred rhythms from the Immortal,—may Indra satisfy me through the intelligence. O God, may I become a vessel of the Immortal. May my body be full of vision and my tongue of sweetness, may I hear the much and vast with my ears. For thou art the sheath of Brahman covered over and hidden by the intelligence.[1]

[1] I.4 This is one of the notable passages cited by Sri Aurobindo to illustrate how the psychological and spiritual character and function of the Gods implicit in the Veda is made explicit in the Upanishads. Here Indra is invoked plainly and unequivocally as the Godhead of the divine Mind, *brahmaṇaḥ kośosi medhayā pihitaḥ*—behind the veil of Intelligence stands Indra, form and emanation of Brahman.

Brimming with this Illumination vouchsafed by the Lord of the Divine Intelligence, scintillating with this dynamis of Knowledge which he wishes to share with as large a number of his fellow-beings as possible, the Rishi calls for worthy seekers from everywhere:

[1] *May the Brahmacharins come unto me. Svāhā!*
From here and there may the Brahmacharins come unto me. Svāhā!
May the Brahmacharins set forth unto me. Svāhā!

And for what immediate purpose?

May the Brahmacharins attain self-mastery. Svāhā!
May the Brahmacharins attain to peace of soul. Svāhā!

He is fully conscious that the Knowledge that he holds, the Powers of Light with which his being bristles, are not his own but are the Lord's and he seeks to keep himself an untrammelled channel of His. He prays:

O Gracious Lord, into that which is thou may I enter. Svāhā!

He knows that by himself he cannot rise high enough, sustain himself there long enough; his nature is clamped with the triple knot of Ignorance and dogged by the hold of Inertia. The Waters of the purifying and uplifting consciousness, the irresistible currents of Grace have to flow into his being in torrents and cleanse and release him out of his obstinate imperfections.

Thou art a river with a hundred branching streams, O Lord of Grace, in Thee may I wash me clean. Svāhā!
Do thou also enter into me, O Shining One. Svāhā!

It is the Divine Lord who is to bend and take up into Himself him who is striving to reach out to Him, who by dint of *tapasyā* has arrived near his promixity but cannot go further without His Grace.

O Lord, thou art my neighbour, thou dwellest very near me. Come to me be my light and sun.

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We are familiar with the three worlds of the Earth, the Sky and the Heavens to which the ancients applied the three great well-known terms, *vyāhṛtis*, *bhur*, *bhuvar* and *swar*.[2] There is, says the Upanishad, a fourth

[1] (1.5)

[2] There are in all seven *vyāhṛtis* in the ancient conception of the Veda and the Upanishads viz. *bhur*, *bhuvar*, *svar*, constituting this lower creation, *aparārdha* and the *jana*,

with which they are intimately connected. That is the world of Mahas, the world of the Vast,[1] the Light, which we are told, was first announced by the Rishi Mahachamasya. This is the *vyāhṛti* which is termed the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo, the Gnosis standing at the summit of this lower creation of the worlds of matter, life and mind. The Upanishad declares that this is Brahman itself, the very Self of the Manifesting Reality, of which the other worlds, the Gods presiding over them, are limbs. They live, increase and prosper by the Power of this Mahas which is compared to the Sun—Mahas is the source of Light (and fire) of the worlds. If the Bhur, earth, vibrates with the rhythms of the Riks, Bhuvar with the Saman and Svar with the Yajus, the Mahas pulsates with the vibrations of the Eternal Word which is at the root of all of them. Similarly, the several currents of the life-force that flow in the three worlds derive their sustenance from the world of Mahas which is like food to them. The Mahas "is called the fourth world, because it is above the triple world of ours, *bhuḥ*, *bhuvaḥ*, *svaḥ*. It stands between the two—between the higher triple world of the plenary Sat-Chit-Ananda above on the one hand and the lower triple on the other. It carries within it, above it, and one with it in a sense the higher triple, and it also releases the lower triple world through various agencies for the formation and perfection of the higher half—what is called Parardha—in terms of the lower, the created lower triple. Radically, it is this world of the Mahas that is responsible for the lower triple creation and it is from this world that forces of manifestation of the Many are released and set to play to work out certain possibilities of the Immense Intelligence and power of the Spirit in the finite formations of the world-being and Force-movement. Because its centre is charged with the infinitude of Sat-Chit-Ananda, it is one with it Above; because its face is turned towards Manifestation, it is one with the Many that represent the self-limiting and self-conditioning attitude and capacity of the Supreme Spirit." (Sri Kapali Sastry)[2]

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Brahman is indeed, the All—these worlds which are his manifestations,

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tapas and *satya* of the higher, *parārdha*, with the world of Mahas in between. But the text before us deals with only the first four of them.

[1] *Mahas* is derived from the root *mah* which means the same as *bṛh* to grow vast, grow without bounds.

[2] *Lights on the Fundamentals* p. 42.

himself the several gods Agni, Vayu, Sun etc. who sustain the respective worlds over which they preside[1]; Speech, Sight, Hearing, Knowledge are but the functionings of his own emanations. The whole etherial Space in which the universe is spread is but one self-extension of Brahman; Life and Immortality, Truth and Bliss are the very stuff of his being. And man can approach and realise Brahman in any of these forms. But the most direct and, in a manner, the easiest way is to find Him in oneself. In him, says the Upanishad, the Immortal, the Radiant Person, Purusha, is there stationed in the pure spaces of the heart. *He is there.* There one has to delve and there gain identity with the Purusha who is the Self at once of oneself and also the Self of All. In man, the mental being, in whom the awakened and active consciousness normally centres itself and finds expression on the mind level, the divine Delegate poises himself in the characteristic form of the *manomaya puruṣa* Mental Person, and governs his becoming. But his essential station in the individual is in the heart which is not to be confused with the physical heart, but "the inner or secret heart, not the outer vital emotional centre",[2] the subtler spaces within which defy the norms of material space and open out into endless vistas as one pursues their track in Sadhana.

"This Atman who is too subtle for comprehension like the Akasha is everywhere present, the universal Being, the Creator who constitutes the worlds and beings and directs them and their forces: He is at the same time awake in the heart of things, seated within in the deepest depths, in the heart of man, *antar hṛdaye.* Silent and unconcerned, yet he is the Divine Being within transmitting this Truth-Will to the luminous soul of the mental person, *manomaya puruṣa,* embodied in the *prāṇa,* for its realisation and expression in the outer existence. He is smaller, *aṇiyān,* than the smallest we can perceive or conceive of. He is the Divine in the heart of every creature, the Divine as the Individual but not a finite Being although he founds Himself in the limited and the conditioned existence, and supports the individuality as the Individual. For this self-differentiation, the self-limiting itself is an expression of the all-seeing Power of His Infinite Being. He is greater, *jyāyān,* than the Earth, the Sky, the High Heaven and all other worlds, greater and vaster than the greatest and vastest of our comprehension. Both as subtle or small, *aṇuḥ* and great or large, *mahān,* he tran-

[1] Thus Agni is the God who presides over the material world, the Earth, Vayu over the Sky-World and Surya over the Heavens etc.

[2] Sri Aurobindo: Letters (I series).

scends our understanding. He is therefore the Beyond, the Transcendent, the Atman, who is also the Universal Self and Godhead of all existence and in all creatures, and is yet the same Self, the Self of my being, *eṣa me Ātmā*, the Divine Master of my individuality whose Truth-Will constitutes the poise and attitude of the Purusha encased in the mind with pranic body for action and expression in the vast field of this created Existence." (Sri Kapali Sastry)[1]

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We said earlier, that the mind of the seeker must get trained to look and think in a clear and direct manner which goes straight to the root of things. The text harks back to this imperative need and to facilitate clear thinking analyses the fivefold categories of the Universe, world-wise, deity-wise, being (or element)-wise and breath-wise, sense-wise and substance-wise, and points to their co-ordination.

As to the concentration of the mind, for centering the consciousness progressively upon the Ideal of Brahman, there are many aids, a variety of supports recommended to the seeker in the Upanishads. But the most important and celebrated is the repetition of the sacred syllable OM which is held to be the nearest sound-approximation to Brahman and whose vibrations go to open up the heights of the Supreme Self for the aspiring consciousness of man.

OM is the Eternal, OM is all this universe. OM is the syllable of assent: saying 'OM! let us hear,' they begin the citation. With OM they sing the hymns of the Sama; with OM Shom they pronounce the Śāstra. With OM the priest officiating at the sacrifice says the response. With OM Brahma begins creation[2]*. With OM one sanctions the burnt offering. With OM the brahmin ere he expounds the Knowledge, cries 'May I attain the Eternal.' The Eternal verily he attains.*[3]

The syllable OM has a special significance each, to the seeker, to the Jnanin, to the priest, to the grammarian. Sri Kapali Sastry points out, in the course of a profound discussion on the *Sphota and the Spoken Word*:[4]

[1] *Lights on the Upanishads*, pp. 56-57.
[2] Or, 'with OM the chief priest gives sanction.'
[3] I.8
[4] Vide *Sri Aurobindo: Lights on the Teachings* p. 142.

"...the Primordial Eternal sensible Sound, which is the Immutable repository of Vibrant Intelligence whence spring the Vedas, all words of Wisdom and Works...is signified by the mystic syllable Om, which is as much a symbol as a living word expressive of the 'Immutable, supreme Ether or Akasha" (*akṣaram paramam vyoma*). Here again, it is not the external aspect of the letter, but the inner sensible sound OM that raises the necessary set of vibrations to manifest the sense of the Supreme Being, Ishwara, in the consciousness of the utterer and the hearer. Apart from the inherent potency as the Sound-substance of all sounds, OM is used in the Sanskrit language as a word of affirmation and sanction. The Chhandogya Upanishad calls it *anujnākṣara*, the word of sanction or approval.[1] In classical Sanskrit and in conversation, it is a word of agreement or affirmation conveying the sense of 'O yes'...It is called Pranava because it is highly praised, *prakarśena nūyate iti praṇavaḥ*. Undoubtedly, it is this Pranava, OM that represents the Eternal Word, *nityā vāk*, of the Rig-veda."

In the words of Sri Aurobindo: OM is "the mantra, the expressive sound-symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolises and is supposed indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above now superconscient to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence."[2]

Meditation, study and intellectual grasp of the truths in the sacred lore are not enough. There should be, says the Upanishad, a conscientious living out of the Veda. What one learns, one has to translate into practice; not only make part of one's own life but also impart it to others aspiring for it, both by example and by precept.

Righteousness with the study and teaching of Veda; Truth with the study and teaching of Veda; askesis with the study and teaching of Veda; self-mastery with the study and teaching of Veda. Peace of soul with the study and teaching of Veda. The household fires with the study and teaching of Veda.

[1] The voice that chants to the creator Fire,
The symboled OM, the great assenting Word,
(Sri Aurobindo: *SAVITRI*. III.2)

[2] *Letters* (First series) p. 246.

The burnt offering with the study and teaching of Veda. Progeny with the study and teaching of Veda. Joy of thy child's mother with the study and teaching of Veda. Children of thy children with the study and teaching of Veda—"these duties."

The text narrates how three different sages asseverated the primacy of their respective disciplines:

'Truth is first', said the truth-speaker, the Rishi, son of Rathitara.
'Askesis is first' said the constant in austerity, the Rishi, son of Purushishta.
'Study and teaching of Veda is first' said Naka, son of Mudgala.

And it concludes:

For this too is austerity and this too is askesis.[1]

Indeed a study in the sense of enlivening in oneself the Knowledge-content of the Veda and the teaching of it in the sense of communicating to others what is thus made dynamic in one's own person, is a tapasya *par excellence.*

A splendid Hymn voiced by sage Trishanku in the ecstasy of his illumined realisation is then held aloft before the seeker to give a vision of the Goal he is to strive for, of the State Beatific he is to progressively realise in himself. Here is the testament of his glorious arrival at Self-Knowledge:

I am He that moves the Tree of the Universe and my glory is like the shoulders of a high-mountain. I am lofty and pure like sweet nectar in the strong, I am the shining riches of the world, I am the deep thinker, the deathless One who decays not from the beginning.[2]

The Supreme Reality in manifestation, its manifold Creation, is often compared in the ancient traditions—Indian and non-Indian—to a gigantic Tree with innumerable branches and leaves. The Rig-veda speaks of the Tree out of which the Earth and the Heaven have been fashioned,[3] the Swetasvetara Upanishad compares the One Purusha by whom all this is filled to an Immovable Tree,[4] the Katha refers to the Eternal Ashwattha Tree whose roots are above and branches downward[5] and the Gita repeats the very epithet describing the Cosmic Tree.[6]

[1] I.9 [2] I.10
[3] क उ स वृक्षः आस यतो द्यावापृथिवी निष्टतक्षुः (X.31.7)
[4] वृक्ष इव स्तब्धो दिवि तिष्ठत्येकस्तेनेदं पूर्णं पुरुषेण सर्वम्। (III.9)
[5] ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः (II.3.1)
[6] ऊर्ध्वमूलमधः शाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् (XV.1)

Commenting on this passage, Sri Aurobindo writes: 'First there comes a description of cosmic existence in the Vedantic image of the Aswattha tree. This tree of cosmic existence

Verily, he alone who has attained complete identity with Brahman, the immortal Source, the immanent Sustainer and the transcendent Overlord of Creation, could speak in such assured accents as the *Mover of the World-Tree!*

Then follows the famous peroration by the Teacher who has declared the Veda, charging the disciple with injuction to live *fuly*, to live a life of high purpose, not only given to the spiritual endeavour of his soul but embracing also his duties and responsibilities to his parents, to his elders, to the society in which he is born and from which he draws means for his progress, to the divinities who protect, aid and lead him to the Goal Supreme towards which he is pointed the way and given the means wherewith to advance. He commands:

Speak truth, walk in the way of thy duty, neglect not the study of Veda. When thou hast brought to thy Master the wealth that he desires, thou shalt not cut short the long thread of thy race. Thou shalt not be negligent of truth; thou shalt not be negligent of thy duty, thou shalt not be negligent of welfare; thou shalt not be negligent towards thy increase and thy thriving; thou shalt not be negligent of the study and teaching of Veda.

Thou shalt not be negligent of thy works unto the Gods or thy works unto the Fathers. Let thy father be unto thee as thy God and thy mother as thy Goddess whom thou adorest. Serve the Master as a God and as a God the stranger within thy dwelling. The works that are without blame before the people thou shalt do these with diligence and no others. The deeds we have done that are good and righteous thou shalt practise these as a religion and no others.

Whosoever are better and nobler than we among the Brahmins, thou shalt refresh with a seat to honour them. Thou shalt give with faith and reverence;

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has no beginning and no end, *nānto na cādiḥ*, in space or in time; for it is external and imperishable, *avyaya*. The real form of it cannot be perceived by us in the material world of man's embodiment, nor has it any apparent lasting foundation here; it is an infinite movement and its foundation is above in the supreme of the Infinite. Its principle is the ancient sempiternal urge to action, *pravṛtti*, which for ever proceeds without beginning or end from the original Soul of existence, *ādyam puruṣam yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇi*. Therefore its original source is above beyond Time in the Eternal, but its branches stretch down below and it extends and plunges its other roots, well-fixed and clinging roots of attachment and desire with their consequences of more and more desire and an endlessly developing action, plunges them downward here into the world of men...the branches of this cosmic tree extend both below and above, below in the material, above in the supraphysical planes." (*Essays on the Gita*)

without faith thou shalt not give. Thou shalt give with shame, thou shalt give with fear; thou shalt give with fellow-feeling. Moreover if thou doubt of thy course or of thy action, then to whatsoever Brahmins be there who are careful thinkers, devout, not moved by others, lovers of virtue, not severe or cruel, even as they do in that thing, so do thou. Then as to men accused and arraigned by their fellows, whatsoever Brahmins be there who are careful thinkers, devout, not moved by others, lovers of virtue, not severe or cruel, even as they are towards these, so be thou.

This is the law and the teaching. These are the Commandments. In such wise shalt thou practise religion, yea, verily, in such wise do ever religiously.[1]

The Section concludes with a chant of thanksgiving to the Gods who were fervantly invoked at the outset. The disciple has been enabled by their Grace to receive the preliminary knowledge from the Preceptor, to perceive the lines on which his inner line is to be oriented and the corresponding mould in which even his outer life is to be shaped. He hymns his gratitude with a full heart:

Be peace to us Mitra. Be peace to us Varuna. Be peace to us Aryaman. Be peace to us Indra and Brihaspati. May far-striding Vishnu be peace to us. Adoration to the Eternal. Adoration to thee, O Vayu. Thou, thou art the visible Eternal and as the visible Eternal I have declared thee. I have declared Righteousness; I have declared Truth. That has protected me. That has protected the speaker. Yea, it protected me; it protected the speaker. OM! Peace! Peace! Peace! [2]

And what is the High Knowledge, the Brahma Vidya, for whose reception the whole being of the aspirant is so meticulously processed? The succeeding Section, *Brahmānanda Valli*, provides the answer.

M. P. PANDIT

[1] I.11
[2] I. 12

MAN AND HIS CONFLICTS

MAN is not the mere human animal to remain content with the present with the satisfaction of his crude physical and vital cravings. He holds under the mask of his pragmatic consciousness the Divine himself whom he has to manifest in his own being. But he is separated from his inner divinity as also from the other selves by a double wall of ignorance which keeps him confined within the region of his ego-centricity. Ignorant of the truth of his own being as also that of the others, the whole history of his terrestrial adventure has so far been marked by conflicts, physical, vital and mental, which embitter his life and impede his journey onwards. His Psychic being is destined to lead man to his spiritual upliftment but normally his surface-consciousness has no conscious relation with it and its states and processes, in fact, none of its activities, are attuned to the harmony of the Psychic Being or Chaitya Purusha. This divine Guide in him is constantly transmitting his directions and impulsions for his guidance, some of which do reach the surface-consciousness through some chinks in the wall of egoistic ignorance; unable to understand the source and meaning of such messages, man ignores the suggestions that come from within and allows himself to be led by the demands and impulsions of his vital element. But the Divine Guide, seated in the human heart is not thwarted by his indifference or even displeased by his constant lapses; He waits with "the entire love of the mother and entire patience of the teacher" till the blundering human wayfarer stumbles into the Light and guidance of the Divine Purusha in him and ultimately makes Him the charioteer of his chariot of life. In the meantime, man's journey through repeated births and deaths is beset with all the conflicts of an ignorant consciousness interspersed with vague yearnings for an unknown Beyond and a touch of sadness in the midst of the bounties of external nature.

These conflicts are not exactly similar in every case; they arise out of our reactions to environment and vary according to the type of the particular mental individuality experiencing them. Everyman is not exactly of the same nature and we may distinguish principally three types of mental individuality, namely, Tamasic, Rajasic and Sattwic, according to the

classification of the Sankhya philosophy. A man is said to be Tamasic, Rajasic or Sattwic according as the Tamasic, Rajasic or Sattwic element is, respectively, dominant in his make-up. The tamasic individual is conservative and is more or less averse to much activity or initiative; the Rajasic person is extremely active, ambitious, restless and passionate; the Sattwic person is of a calm and peaceful bent, capable of sober thinking with a certain detachment from the stir and strife of normal life. Hence under the same circumstances the reactions will vary in nature and extent according to the make up of the particular mental individuality experiencing them. Man is aware only of his surface-consciousness and takes it to be his total being and he is ignorant of the vast sub-conscious and subliminal parts behind it. As a matter of fact man's waking consciousness is but a narrow strip or a small fraction of his total being and consciousness. Besides, the Chaitya Purusha or the Psychic Being, which is the real centre of man's individualisation, controls this surface or outer consciousness indirectly through its representatives, the Mental Being, the Vital Being and the Physical Being; these three, the Mental Being, the Vital Being and the Physical Being constitute man's subliminal or Inner Being. In our surface-consciousness separate impulsions are received from these separate centres, Mental, Vital and Physical, but they are not felt distinctly; they roll into one state of undifferentiated surface-awareness which we call Mind but which, in fact, is composed of distinct impulsions from the separate subliminal centres, Mental, Vital and Physical.

There are thus different types of persons according as any one of the Tamasic, Rajasic or Sattwic or in other words, the Physical, Vital or the Mental element is stronger in them than the other two. Inspite of the present state of culture and refinement to which man has attained, the Vital element plays a dominant part in most of his activities.

The Triangular Tug-of-war

Man is at present a physical-vital-mental formation and the three principles, physicality, vitality and mentality—the body, life and mind —are in constant conflicts with one another. It is generally supposed that the body is the greatest impediment to spiritual progress and it should be got rid of at the earliest opportunity; thus much unmerited calumny has been laid at the door of the body. But life and mind play no insignificant part in creating various conflicts in our being and thereby retard

our spiritual progress. In point of fact, a triangular tug-of-war is being constantly carried on between these three members, body, life and mind, and more often than not it is the body which is imposed upon and enslaved against its will to the needs of the other two, principally, the vital element. For instance, if a man is predominantly of a vital nature he will constantly try to impose his vital demands on the body. The vital element in him in its urge to satisfy its passions, desires and impulses, draws large drafts upon the limited capacity of the body. Whether the vital urge in him expresses itself in inordinate ambitions of various kinds or some ignoble activities, it is the body that is made to go all the way to bear the burden of his vital nature. Often the vital element in man harnesses the mental part also to its needs and, between them, they make the body an unwilling slave without any power to assert itself against the tyranny of the other parts; the vital and mental elements keep the body in subjection for the satisfaction of their impetuous demands. "The dull and dumb immobility of which it is sometimes accused is after all perhaps a mode of its self-defence against the wild vagaries of the mind and the vital to which it is often called upon to lend support". The body, incapable of satisfying the demands of Life, is in constant revolt against the tyranny of Life.

The Mind is in constant war with both the members by turns. At one time it tries to act as a brake upon the rampant demands of Life on the body and thus save the body from the ravages of vital excesses and at another time the Mind tries to harness Life's dynamism to its own needs but Life resents its enslavement and misuse by Mind and often the Vital element is much too strong to be led by mental pursuasion. In this way all the three members of this triangular conflict are at constant war with one another and each tries to get the better of the other two or harness the other two to its own needs and impulses.

This tug-of-war varies in pattern and intensity according to the degree of man's mental and moral development and culture. In the primitive state of human society when the animality in men used to be the normal feature of all activities, the mental element had very little say and the satisfaction of vital cravings and passions used to be the essence of all human interests. With the gradual improvement in human outlook and of the standards of values the edge has been taken off the naked barbarities of primitive times; the vital part even now holds the field and these conflicts would not lose their intensity till the mental element becomes more and more strong and brings its sobering influence to bear upon the vital and

physical ones and imposes upon the entire surface or pragmatic consciousness a rule of a mental idal. Unable to resolve these conflicts among the different members, Mind tries to come to some sort of compromise and failing in that finds solace in the mortality of our being and the hope of a happier existence hereafter. In the present state of darkness, little does the normal mind realise that all these strifes and conflicts on our surface-consciousness are born out of "the aspiration of an immortal being in a mortal life and body", and that there is a constant impulsion from an unknown source to exceed the capacities of these warring members. This is however not the whole story, for the conflicts and divisions between the physical, vital and mental elements extend even beyond the surface-consciousness. There is not only these discords and divisions between the body, life and mind but each of them is divided against itself as follows.

We have seen how the Psychic Being or Caitya Purusha controls our Outer being indirectly through its representatives, namely, the Physical Purusha or Instinctive Soul, the Vital Purusha or Impulsive Soul and the Mental Purusha or Emotional Soul—Annamaya Purusha, Pranamaya Purusha and Manomaya Purusha. These three Purushas are constantly pushing the physical-vital-mental formation to exceed its present weakness and incapacity and proceed from strength to strength. But the capacities of our body, life and mind are much less than those of the Physical, Vital and Mental Purushas and, as such, our Outer being composed of our body, life and mind cannot satisfy the demands of the Inner Being. Unable to comply with the constant impulsions of the aforesaid Triple Soul, the Outer being is torn between its urge to go forward and its incapacity to outgrow its present disabilities, and the result is conflict between instinct and instinct, desires and desires, emotions and emotions and all the impulses of an imperfect nature. As man grows more and more as a thinking and aspiring being and mounts higher and higher in the scale of refinement and culture he becomes more and more acutely conscious of these discords of his egoistic consciousness and he seeks in every direction to arrive at a harmony that will set at rest all these conflicts among his warring members and put an end to all the poignant experiences born out of them. Nor are his relations with the world at large and the other selves free from discords, and he has also to bring a principle of harmony, peace, joy and unity to bear upon his relations with other selves and with the world at large. From the dizzy heights of success he falls into the abyss of utmost frustration,

his moments of intense joy and self-satisfaction are followed too closely by the most poignant experiences of life. Such, indeed, is the tragedy of his pragmatic existence and such is the constant pressure from exte nal nature with a view to awaken in him the need of exceeding his limitations.

The Three Pre-occupations

Driven by the urge to find a solution of the multiple discords of life, the mind of man, while groping in the uncertain light of a half-awakened consciousness sought the remedy, principally, in three different directions. Thus, his search led him towards (1) an effort towards inner Spiritual growth and perfection, (2) an effort towards establishing better relations with the other selves and the world at large, and (3) an effort towards making this world a better place to live in, to make it better suited to our idealism. His constant conflicts in the midst of apparent ease and opulence and his discontent amidst wealth and material splendour bear testimony to man's divine destiny and he turns inward for Light and Knowledge and deliverance from what is undoubtedly the shackles of egoistic ignorance. Thus he turns towards his inner spiritual growth and perfection which becomes one of his principal pre-occupations. But the pull of the world around him and the need for harmonious relation between man and man are none the less insistent, and all his efforts therefore swayed between the double demands of his inner and outer perfection. Nature gives not a little latitude to eliminate all methods by actual experiences and man has been untiring in his efforts to create a perfect world with imperfect materials. No external device has been spared to build up an ideal world by external control. Leaders of men and society spared no pains to weave rigid and apparently fool-proof patterns of social and political life for the ideal of a better individual in a better world. Mass regimentation of the race, the immolation of individualism to supposed collective interests are some of the devices which have been tried. At a certain period the individual has been held to be of paramount importance and society was looked upon merely as the field for the individual's growth and perfection. At some other time, it is the growth of the race or the collective being that is considered to be all-important; the individual has to subordinate his interest to that of the race and he is considered important to the extent that he sub-serves the interest of the race or the collective being. In this, what Sri Aurobindo calls "the viccissitudes of human thought", "he is moved by nature to live

for himself and by something deep within him to affirm his individuality; he is called upon by society and by a certain mental idealism to live for humanity or for the greater good of the community". Man is led to resolve all conflicts between man and man, between individualism and collectivism, between nations and nations, by all sorts of alternating social and political devices. The external methods commend themselves to the extrovert; one method after another has been tried and rejected when found wanting. Failing to get an insight into the potent secrets of Life and its profundities, the extrovert persists in his method of external control and adjustments with a view to reduce the multiple conflicts of Life. But these conflicts can no more be resolved by his methods than that internal cankers can be cured by external ministrations. But Nature as we see allows every latitude to man to learn through mistakes till he stumbles upon truth and realises that it is only through internal opening and individual perfection that harmony can be established.

Individuals and races have often tried to come into closer and closer relations with one another, but all these associations were for particular ends; it is some community of interests that always brings men together. All these outward joinings yield minor results and they soon fall out on the flimsiest of causes. Casting of various peoples and races into a common mould and more and more standardisation of human values and rules of conduct, with a view to eliminate discords and disagreements from every sphere of life are even now being tried on large tracts of this world with none too rosy chances of achieving ultimate harmony. More often than not, our attempts to achieve unity, mutuality, and harmony, by external methods have foundered on the shoals of strife, discord and unhappiness. Yet man has come back again and again to the task of achieving harmony amid our embodied ignorances by all sorts of extraneous methods, for, the urge of the essential unity behind all diversities is irresistible and hence his constant efforts to establish harmony between himself and other selves and between himself and the world at large, by newer and newer adjustments of mutual interests which result in creating only an imperfect structure of life ridden with all the divisions and discords of egoistic ignorance.

"Harmony is the natural rule of the Spirit"; it is by going inwards that man can find the clue to the solution of the various problems of harmony. He has to pass through the mazes of repeated births and deaths till he awakens to a deeper self-knowledge and bring himself under a law that will exceed the petty conventions of his egoistic life. This world started

with Inconscience which was no more than the mask under which the Divine consciousness slept its sleep of inconscience; it is now out of that apparent inconscience that the Divine consciousness is gradually awakening and proceeding towards complete manifestation on this earth. It is within this Lila of self-concealment and self-discovery that man is called upon to play his part as the divine playmate of the Lord. But in the present state of the half-emergence of consciousness—Mind being considered to be only a middle term—it is diffcult for man to realise his tremendous importance in the scheme of creation or to bring about the solution of the multiple conflicts of life by extraneous devices. Only when consciousness further awakens in him that he will see the source and the cause of all the discords and divisions of life; he will see that they are not permanent features of life on earth nor punishment meted out to man for his ante-natal sins; they are rather the hurdles he has to negotiate during his journey out of darkness and ignorance.

All external methods have been found to be unavailing; repression or indulgence has not been able to curb or satiate the passions of our vital nature; the strifes and conflicts between the different members of this physical-vital-mental formation have not been fought to a finish; the outer instrumentation of the Annamaya, Pranamaya and the Manomaya Purushas, that is to say, our body, life and mind, are not yet awake to the impulsions of the Inner Being; the contending interests of the individual and the race have not yet been solved by mutual adjustments or by mass regimentation, and to the pragmatic consciousness the world at large does not yet seem to be an ideal place to live in. Humanity, thus, groaned and wilted under the weight of the multiple evils and sufferings of life and at times peace and harmony seemed to be inconsistent with life upon this earth.

The Divine Grace

Man is not destined to languish in darkness and ignorance during the whole of his terrestrial adventure, for, he has a divine mission to perform. It is therefore at times when the darkest shadow of evil and iniquities overhang the whole landscape, when all the sacred and cherished ideals of life seem to be on the point of being swept away by the surging tides of undivine forces, that Divine Grace descends upon earth for the relief of stricken humanity and help a further awakening of consciousness.

In this Lila of Self-concealment and Self-discovery, it is the Lord

Himself that wove this veil of egoistic ignorance around his outer being and again it is the Divine seated in his heart that creates in man a yearning to remove the veil and to outgrow the spell of darkness and ignorance to which he is committed for a portion of his journey. It is his Chaitya Purusha, the Divine representative, that aspires and gradually inspires his outer consciousness to turn inward for Light and guidance and that is why Spirit becomes one of his principal preoccupations in life. Until Spirit becomes his chief preoccupation, unless and until he builds up an inner life of the Spirit it will not be possible for man to resolve the various conflicts that embitter his life on earth. He is not to subordinate himself to any external process or ideal, social, national or communal, with a view to bring harmony in his life; he owes allegiance to the Divine alone and to the Divine he must turn for Light and deliverance from his toil.

It was the pain and anguish of distressed humanity, fumbling through the mazes of births and deaths, that brought down the Divine Himself from transcendence. On account of undying Love and compassion for man, the Divine came down among us in frail human bodies so that His constant Presence and influence may mould and transmute humanity; it is the Light that consciously put on the robe of darkness, it is the Illimitable that put on the shackles of human limitation, it is the Lord Himself who gave Himself up completely to man in all the loving tenderness which the Divine alone is capable of and which became a constant inspiration for man's spiritual upliftment.

It was doubtless for such a divine purpose that Sri Aurobindo came upon this earth to lift man from the rut of despair and obscurantism and to inspire him with his gospel of a Divine Life upon this earth. Has not the Master assured us that

> "Whatever the appearance we must bear,
> Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
> When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
> A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.
> After we have served this great divided world
> God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right.
> A date is fixed in the calender of the Unknown,
> An anniversary of the Birth sublime:
> Our soul shall justify its chequered walk,
> All will come near that now is naught or far."

His advent heralded the doom of all the undivine forces which impeded the spiritual progress of humanity. It is the message of his integral philosophy and Yoga that lit up the darkness and uncertainties in drooping hearts and it is his life-long fight against the forces of evil and darkness that has made it possible for man today to stand on the verge of a new era and a new world the halo of the none too distant Light of which even now suffuses the horizon.

"The greatest victories are the least noisy. The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum."

At this grey dawn of the Victory of Light over the forces of Darkness, who will now stand aside and resist the loving call of the Divine Mother, who is constantly with us in her frail human body to wipe off the tears of anguish from her stricken children and dissolve our conflicts and discords, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows in the wizardry of Her Divine smile? She asks no more than the little that we have,

"Give all you are, all you have, nothing more is asked of you but also nothing less".

Must we then stray from this Spring of Light and Guidance and hug our little miseries or go down on our knees in utter consecration? The call is irresistible and we can do nothing less than pray:

"Mother Divine, Grant that today may bring to us a completer consecration to thy Will, a more integral gift of ourselves to thy work, a more total forgetfulness of self, a greater illumination, a purer love. Grant that in a communion growing ever deeper, more constant and entire we may be united always more and more closely to Thee and become thy servitors worthy of Thee. Remove from us all egoism, root out all petty vanity, greed and obscurity. May we be all ablaze with thy divine Love, make us thy torches in the world".

This alone will solve all conflicts of Life; there is no other way.

SIDDHESWAR BANERJEE

THE LIFE DIVINE

Vol. II

(An Outline)

Chapter V

The Cosmic Illusion: Mind, Dream and Hallucination

FOR every positive affirmation of mind there is a corresponding negative. This is because the mind deals in possibilities and can arrive at no final certainty. What it takes to be actualities are eventually found to be partial, incomplete and questionable.

At first man lives only in his physical mind, through which only the physical, objective facts are accepted as realities. Such also is the standpoint of physical science, which endeavours to seize facts beyond the senses, but always as an objective physical actuality.

Man has also a vital mentality, which seeks always to satisfy its desire and enlarge its field of power. Rooted in dissatisfaction it is ever seeking new experiences, incessantly urging to exceed the bounds of circumstances. Man's thinking mind is based on this unrest of the vital mentality, and hence it can reach no satisfying finality. The history of man's thought is a spiral, ever seeking but never arriving at any settled reality of life's aims.

A certain point comes in man's life when the physical mind loses its conviction, and the vital mind frustrated and completely dissatisfied finds everything an illusion; and likewise the thinking mind, constantly breaking down its constructions, fails to reach anything Absolute and Eternal. All existence seems but an immense cosmic Illusion. It is at this juncture in human thought that the great world-negating philosophies have arisen,—particularly in India those of Buddha and Shankara. These latter—both powerful influences on Eastern thought—were centred on the three principles; those of the chain of Karma, those of escape from the wheel of rebirth, and those of the illusory or transitory nature of the world (as Maya). We have first, however, to consider how far this basic concept of cosmic Illu-

sionism can stand against the concept of universal Realism, which is the more positive approach.

The strongest support for illusionism lies in the thinking mind's sense of frustration, and the circling motion of life which persists in always remaining the same and imperfect. All the world's religions have only produced momentary relief, and no radical, permanent change. Moreover it appears from practical investigations that the fundamental laws and values of the terrestrial existence are fixed. How then can man escape the view that the world is irredeemably a world of ignorance, suffering and frustration, and that the ideals he is seeking, the exact opposites of his worldly experience, are to be found elsewhere?

We cannot readily accept the religious view that the world is intentionally a world of ordeal and failure, for there is no satisfactory connection between the here and the elsewhere. Rather it seems that the world, part of an immense, enduring and complex universe, is the field for the working out of a greater creative motive, a growth from Ignorance into Divine Knowledge. The process of evolution would then hold the hope of a Divine manifestation.

We have, however, to meet the claims of a higher spiritual basis for the philosophy of world-negation, which contends that there is only one Reality, the transcendent or supracosmic. If this is the one Truth, then the divine life in Nature is illusory or unreal. How far is this view the final one?

In support of cosmic Illusion the analogy of dream experience is often given. For as a dream seems real during sleep, and unreal on waking, so our experience of the world seems positive until we stand back and find it has no reality. But we have to see what are the similarities and real differences between the waking consciousness of the physical mind and the experience of dream and hallucination; and whether the world is really an illusion, a dream illusion or otherwise.

First we have to see that there are different states of consciousness. When we lose one state and pass into another the former then appears unreal. Such is our experience of the cosmos when we first pass into the spiritual silence. But all we have established is that each is a reality in its own sphere. Thus in dream experience, in addition to the fact that it is a separate continuity or coherence between one dream and another. This is not the case with our waking life, which has a more complete connected significance. Also the dream-consciousness cannot exercise the control

which is to some extent present in the waking consciousness. Apart from all this there is a continuity of soul, even though our bodies perish, just as there is a continuity of the universe itself.

We have to see whether there is any significance or representation of reality in dreams. Sleep is a rest for the surface mind and the conscious activities of the body, but not for the inner consciousness. Near the surface is a subsconscious element which acts as a passage for our dream-experience. It is the random and fugitive formations of the subconscious that largely enter into dreams. Yet as psycho-analysis has tried to discover, there seems to be something real behind the dream.

In sleep the surface physical part relapses towards the originating inconscience and enters into the intermediary, half-conscious zone of the subconscious. Here are stored the impressions of past habits of mind, repressed impulses, and the rejected elements of the nature, which attempt to reassert themselves in the dream-consciousness, mostly disguised. Sinking below this subconscious activity into the inconscience, we enter into deep dreamless sleep.

Even in the denser layers of the subconscient we are still dreaming, but there we are unable to retain its more obscure dream figures. We may also enter, in sleep, into the subliminal parts of the being whose records may be more readily recovered if they have occurred near the surface subconscient. Here again we only experience the illusion of dreamlessness; for when we become more inwardly conscious, we can recover not only the deeper subconscient layers but also our deeper subliminal selves, and thus become aware of supraphysical worlds.

It is the subliminal that is the greater dream-builder. Here we experience more coherent dreams in which problems may be solved, or warnings or indications of the future given. Some are symbolical dreams with a strong bearing on our life, while others are records of happenings on other planes of our being or of universal being. Subliminal dreams are much more rare than subconscient dreams. It is only by living more inwardly that we can enter more readily into the subliminal consciousness.

If we become wholly conscious in sleep we realise that we pass through various states of consciousness and reach a true peaceful dreamless rest for a short period before returning to the waking consciousness. But ordinarily only experiences nearer the waking surface are remembered, unless we trace back in memory from dream to dream.

The subliminal self is a meeting-place of the consciousness that has

emerged through the evolution and the consciousness that has descended from above through involution. It consists of an inner mind, inner vital, and inner physical being which is larger than our outer being and which originates and influences the movements in our surface self. The subliminal has direct contact with the universal; whereas the surface self has, through the senses, only an indirect contact. It has subtle senses which give a form to its direct experience of objects, and it can communicate with the worlds of being which belong to the involutionary descent. These are the realms into which our mind and vital being retire in sleep or in trance.

Even in the waking state we receive inspirations, ideas and suggestions from the subliminal, but we are not aware of this source. It is sleep with its dream record that brings us more directly into contact with the subliminal, which is the inner and wider part of the being behind the outer physical consciousness. Beyond mental or sensory experience is the superconscient, which can only very rarely come into our normal consciousness. This is the pure sleep state. Beyond even the superconscient is the transcendent state, the incommunicable Self. If this latter is regarded as the sole truth, the other three states would then be regarded as illusory. But they may also be seen to be three different orders or states of consciousness.

Are dreams, then, an aspect of reality, or at least symbol-images of some reality? For we even see the physical universe only through images impressed on our senses. But even so, these images are made real to us through the intuitive consciousness which obtains a tangible experience of the object. And also reason comes in, which builds up the object in perspective. We see that behind the sense impression, though it is not an exact impression, there is in fact a reality and not an illusion. The theory of cosmic Illusion, however, only sees the indeterminable pure Existence as the one reality, which is featureless. And this cannot be translated into anything like a dream, which is a transcript of some featured reality. Hence the dream analogy cannot help our inquiry into what constitutes the ultimate Reality and our relation to it.

In a similar way hallucination is not an apt analogy to explain the truth of reality. Hallucinations are either visual (seeing the image without the presence of the object, as in a mirage), or mental hallucination (in which an object is obscured by a misplaced mental image, as seeing a snake for a rope). But is this placing of an unreal figure on a reality our true experience of the world in relation to the Beyond? We must note, however, that in the hallucination the false image represents something existent, though mis-

placed; it is not an unreality. If the world is a non-existent imposed on the bare Reality then the analogy of hallucination cannot apply.

The nature of hallucination, like all mental errors, results from ignorance, which through partial knowledge miscombines its data. We must therefore dispense with analogies and see the truth in itself. In other words, we must see if our perception of realities is wrong.

The original truth is that there is an unalterable One on which is imposed an immense organised diversity. There appears to be no relation between them or imitation of something existent, as is the case with dreams and poetic visions. There is here an original creation. This is not the same as any operation of Mind. What remains a mystery for the thinking mind is that a Reality of Oneness has manifested itself in numberless forms. But this does not mean that the forms are unreal.

We have to see the nature of Mind that has created these illusions. It is clear that our mind is not an original creative power of Consciousness but is a derivative principle. In the evolution Mind stands between an inconscience and a superconscience; in the individual it stands between an inner subliminal and an outer phenomenal world. It receives both possible and actual truths, and it brings out unrealised possibilities which are contained in the physical world. Some possibilities are selected for subjective action; others for objectivisation. Inspirations that mind receives from above are supraphysical truths and these too it seeks to realise.

Mind, however, is limited in knowledge, and it supplements this restriction by imagination and discovery. Thus it sets out to discover the unknown, and seize the possibilities of the Infinite. But it can only actualise what the cosmic Energy will accept from it. Its limitation represents an incompreleteness and an Ignorance. It misobserves actualities, and miscombines possibilities. Thus the mind makes constructions which have no potentiality of realisation; for it is not an original creator like Maya, the so-called Illusive Power.

Mind works best when dealing with objectivised actualities, but it can create only what is possible to the substance. Likewise the inspirations it receives can only take form if they are truth above mind. The creative power of Maya, on the other hand, creates forms in spite of the fact that the Transcendent Reality is Formless. This is the hall-mark of a supramental creative Power.

Imagination is a mental faculty that creates mental structures; it is as yet an instrument of Ignorance and creates both the possible and the im-

possible. Yet imagination is a real way by which mind may discover unknown possibilities of the Infinite. But while it cannot do this with Knowledge, it makes experimental constructions of truth. Even so, imagination exercises a power in the world; for all imaginations represent possibilities, some of which actualise and some not.

All imaginations are the possibilities of the Infinite; they are not illusory. The faculty of imagination can bring us forms and powers from supraphysical domains. Even its phantasy represents actualities on other planes. Although mental error is a misapplication of experience, imagination represents a faculty of intuition of possibility. Eventually it can become a truth imagination. Mind is certainly an instrument of cosmic Ignorance, but not of cosmic Illusion. Mind is also the instrument or derivative of an original Consciousness and Power; and since it seeks and discovers truths, possibilities and actualities, these latter must really belong to the original Consciousness which is above Ignorance.

We may suppose either an original consciousness and power that creates illusions with mind as its instrument, or an original supreme Truth-Consciousness that creates a true universe, with mind as an imperfect consciousness capable of error. In support of the latter we find that the mind even in its ignorance is stumbling towards knowledge. The hypothesis of Cosmic Illusion does not solve the problem of this mixture of Knowledge and Ignorance that confronts man. We have rather to discover the origin of the imperfection; and in this respect Illusion merely obscures the issue.

N. PEARSON

REVIEW

Geographical Factors in Indian History. *By K. M. Panikkar.* Bhavan's Book University, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. Pp. 107. Price Re. 1. 12.

The science of geography has advanced so much in its scope and comprehensiveness that it has begun to be treated in branches each of which has already become a subject of specialist study. So viewed, few of the existing books on India's geography can be called a full and proper study of the subject. Not only the treatment which has been till recently motived by considerations other than absolute fidelity to fact, the materials so far available have for the same reason been too meagre to be the basis of a correct study of the physical configuration of this vast country in all its bearings on the development of its people and culture. Much depends on how the sources are tapped, no less on their variety, especially when the aim is to trace the impact of a country's geography on its history.

In the past when the various peoples were evolving, each with its particular character, the region had undoubtedly a very important role to play in that formative stage of the sub-nations of India. It may not be forgotten that these smaller collective units, nursed by those regions, were the most powerful factors in the total progress of the race, both cultural and political.

It was this phase of Indian history of which a most vivid picture was given by Poet Tagore in the early 'thirties when he related to us—history and geography teachers of Santiniketan at that time—his personal experiences as a teacher of India's history and geography in the early days of his institution. His masterly, in fact, entirely original approach to the subject made us feel—and that was what he wanted—the oneness of India both in her history and geography the teaching of which, as the Poet pointed out, could be most effective when the treatment was a co-ordinate one. It was an objective picture which he held up before our mind's eye, romantic too at the same time; a picture of multiform scenes of human activity, variegated in colour and contour, a marvel of human drama enacted on a stage set by nature. The Poet asked, 'Can you imagine the performance of a play without a stage? How can History exist without Geography?'

These ideas of Tagore which he formulated in his teaching at Santiniketan in the early years of the present century were later found to be echoed and expounded by Lucien Febvre in his famous book *Geographical Introduction to History*, published in 1925, which sought to give geography its proper place in the Humanities as an invariable concomitant of history.

Sardar Panikkar has done a signal service to Indian history by emphasising in his book the important, and in many ways, the shaping factor of geography in the historic development of India. Obviously, his aim is objective and he has in that way covered a wide range of facts about the physical configuration of India having direct bearings on her history. He has—and rightly—controverted the current short-sighted notions of geographers who approach the subject either from the mariner's standpoint or from geopolitical considerations in both of which a large number of countries do not receive any comprehensive attention.

It cannot be denied that politics and commerce, two of the dominant factors in the growth of modern civilisation, have influenced and motived the writing of history and geography so much that neither of them can be called a complete record of all the activities of man against the background of their many-featured field—particular regions of the earth chosen by particular types of men for their activities. Sardar Panikkar is primarily concerned in this book with showing the vital importance of India's geography to her political history, especially as it affects her physical frontiers. Students of Indian history will find in the book certain eminently useful suggestions that may lead them to an understanding of the forces which have worked to shape the political destiny of the country through the ages.

But geography has other aims to fulfil if it is to be a study of the relationship that man has with his surroundings, of how those surroundings help his development, how he reacts to them, so on and so forth. Since politics is not his sole activity, any study of man should consider his other activities as well and appraise the influence on them of the soil and the climate with which he is vitally linked up as a child with its mother. In a fundamental sense, geography is the matrix of history.

Man is a nurseling of the earth. The place in which he is born and brought up and where for generations his forbears lived their days, is one of the most formative force in the growth of his individual and collective life —the solid basis of his nationality. Geography should show the unifying power of land and how in that land man develops his culture, his art and literature, his religion and philosophy, his economic and social life, and all

these as elements of his communal and ultimately, his national life. Much of these creative activities is intimately connected with the land which undoubtedly is one of the forces that promote and sustain them. It is possible to show how a particular region is favourable to a particular activity, the fruit of which, besides being that region's characteristic achievement, becomes in due course its contribution to the progress of the whole country. In ancient India there existed, as they do to some extent in our own day, human collectivities which were famous, each in its way, for remarkable achievements, cultural, social, political, or even military. And that has largely been due to the favourable conditions provided by the region.

Broadly speaking, the sub-nations of India today are more or less the creation of the geographical distinctness of the regions in which they flourished in the long course of their history. Psychologially, this distinctness has had much to do with the dominant inclinations that characterise these human groups, no less their cultures in the development of which the region played an important part. Why one people is emotional and artistic, another impassive and intellectual, and a third practical and utiliterian, may be explained, among other reasons, by the fact of their belonging to regions of plenty or of effort. Similar influences may also be attributed to regions mothered by rivers or to uplands, hilly and arid regions. Postwar researches have shown how variations of climate having different degrees of heat, light and ultra-violet rays act not only on man's pigmentation but also on the physical, mental and emotional make-up of his being. It is true that science has overcome untoward physical conditions, but the fact that peoples exist today in India with special tendencies point to the stamp of the land they inhabit. A knowledge of the geographical conditions with their relation to the growth of human collectivities in India is therefore a great help in our study of the past. In the rise of empires and kingdoms too geography had a part to play both culturally and politically. As instances, may be mentioned the chequered history of the Magadha Empire with its capital at Rajagriha bounded by hills full of historical and religious associations, the marvellous achievements of the Mauryas with their capital at Pataliputra in the Ganga basin, the Pallavas of the south in their heyday with Mamallapuram and Kancheepuram as splendid centres of their political and cultural activities.

The land in which a great people lives and grows, says Sister Nivedita, is the altar of God on which His undying fire burns to keep aflame that people's upward aspirations. It is this sacred and unifying force of 'the

place' that shapes a people into a nation, a distinct group, intended to fulfil a purpose of God, and in that fulfilment lies the total progress of the race. The Mother in the earth is ever active creating better and better types of life-forms, from plant through animal to man, so that in God's own time her best product might be ready for evolution into a yet higher being. To the Seers of ancient India came the vision of the Transcendent Divine as immanent in earth where His Conscious Force does her cosmic work preparing the earth for her destined perfection. The spiritual significance of earth as the home of man in which he exists in order to develop into a larger and higher life—the earth becoming the Home of Light—has to be understood in its relation to man's place in history. Geography has thus an inward aspect which throws into a bold relief its affinity with history.

Sardar Panikkar has made suggestive references to ancient India's literature which provides materials on which can be based a reconstruction of her history in its proper geographical setting. These references and his general topographical survey, however brief, conjure up a bright picture in which the Himalayas shine in all their majesty and grandeur. This 'mountain continent' has ever been the most important factor in the historical evolution of India, not only because of the vastness of its size and the variety of its topography but also because of its dominant influence on the peoples, their art and literature, religion and spirituality, no less than on their economic and political life. Any one who has seen Nandalal Basu's picture *Girisha*, and Promodekumar Chattopadhyaya's Himalayan sketches must have been struck with amazement at the deep hold the Himalayas have on the imagination of the people even today when the marvels of science seem to daze our eyes. There is no word expressive enough of the worshipful regard with which Indians look upon this 'god-souled' mountain whose ineffable appeal to the human soul is universally recognised by ancients and moderns. The great divide is also the great unifier.

The Indian art of temple-architecture is inspired by the heaven-kissing peaks of the Himalayas. E. B. Havell has shown in his book *The Himalayas in Indian Art* that this king of mountains has ever been a source of inspiration to artists, giving to Indian art its character and spiritual content. A solemn spectacle of Nature in meditation—this is Himalaya, even to the outer eye, a tremendous force in the growth of India's spirituality and culture. From this lofty home of countless seers, saints and seekers have flowed thought-currents of Truth, vision and experience carrying with them into the atmosphere below some of the fire and serenity of their soul, inspiring, enriching,

elevating the vast field of spiritual culture that India has been from end to end.

Positive proofs are accumulating that the Himalayas are 'the cradle of man' where he evolved into his 'modern form'—a fact whose bearing on India's history is equally important.

The Himalayas and the eastern and western frontiers mark off India as a single geographical entity and enclose within them the vast and wonderful diversity of nature's creations and of human elements with their more than four thousand years of incomparable cultural achievements. Of these achievements the most marvellous and enduring are those in the sphere of religion and art, which give meaning to India's history as well as to her geography. The canons of ancient Indian architecture include clear directions governing the selection of temple-sites in which geographical considerations form essential factors. Hindu and Buddhist places of pilgrimage in geographically appropriate and auspicious regions are there to accentuate and objectify India's integrity. Principal Hindu faiths or sects have their holy places, in most cases common, spread over the length and breadth of the country. Significantly enough, there is a holy city at each extreme point in the four directions of India. According to the Tantrik conception, the fifty-one sacred centres of Shakti-worship in India, covering the whole face of the country, from Jwalamukhi in the Himalayas to Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin) on the southern sea, from Hinglaj in the west to Kamrup (Assam) in the east, symbolise the fifty-one aspects of the divine Shakti and bring home to the mind and soul of the Tantrik mystics the integrality, the geographical homogeniety and the sacredness of India as the Mother-Force of the world. India's soil is thus indisssolubly wound up with her soul, her geography forming the physical sheath of her history. A look at her geographical figure at once calls up the image of the Mother standing serene, her lofty head erect in the eternal snows, her holy feet at Kanyakumari touching the infinite blue, her wide open arms of welcome extended to East and West, her ancient breast throbbing with the pulsations of an everlasting life, heaving as well with high hopes for her children and for humanity.

The author stresses the importance of the sea to India. An interesting survey of the waters on her three sides is followed by a study of their peculiarities some of which are as unique as they are significant for her history. The view of European writers that navigational tradition first developed around the Aegean Sea is opposed by the fact that the first naval and oceanic tradition grew up in the lands washed by the Arabian Sea. The

economic aspects of the control of the sea are shown by the author in their political implications.

But the author's view of the so-called Aryan invasion may not be taken to be an established fact of history. Swami Vivekananda never accepted it. B. G. Tilak differed from it. Sri Aurobindo held that the Rig-Vedic Hymns were composed somewhere round 3000 B.C., and that if the Aryans had at all migrated to India from outside it must have been many thousands of years before that. This legacy of short-sighted European scholarship may not be the last word on the subject. On the basis of authentic evidences he himself collected from various historic sites and museums of the Middle East, Dr Kalidas Nag of the Calcutta University has shown that 'the Aryan trail started from India.' Indeed, a final solution of this problem would set at rest many a controversy over some of the vital aspects of India's historic development. The myth of the Dravidian and Aryan races stands exploded; and their fundamental cultural unity is now a fact of history.

India, our author says, never developed a proper system of international relations. This is true if we take the words to mean India's relations with other countries only in the sphere of politics. But should we not consider the inherent temperament of the people to whom culture was above everything else? Need we emphasise that in her great past India did have cultural relations with almost the whole known world? Except during the period of Muslim rule, India never lived in isolation. It is true her geographical position has protected her from large-scale foreign agressions. But sea and mountain have never been a bar to India's intercourse with outside world, the starting-point of which is shrouded in the mists of a very distant past. It is a long story, a most romantic one at that, of how Indians developed that intercourse with the peoples of Asia and of other continents, from very early times. And in these efforts they were generally inspired not by any political ambition, but by the noble desire to share with others what their forefathers had achieved in the realm of art and thought. There are coming to light conclusive evidences of this expansive movement of Indian culture. Systematic investigations are sure to add more to them.

It is possible, as Poet Tagore once said, that the famous utterance in the Upanishad: *śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrā* 'Hearken unto me, O ye children of immortality', had been the call of India's soul to people beyond her geographical frontiers. Archaeologists have traced this movement in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome whose emperors Augustus Caesar, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius received embassies from India. International-

ism, as understood by the ancients, took its glorious meaning from the declaration of Ashoka: *sabbe manusse mama putta*, 'All men are my children'. 'The first internationalist in history', this noble monarch strove with all his heart to realise this ideal by sending cultural missionaries to various parts of the western world. According to Winternitz, the Buddhist communities of Palestine and Asia Minor, of whom Essenes and Therapeutis are well-known, were the forerunners of Christianity. India had cultural relations with Persia, Central Asia, China, Japan and almost the whole of eastern and southeastern Asia, and that this not for one or two but for many centuries. It cannot therefore be said that India did not know her neighbours.

The author has made an intriguing study of the routes through which invaders from outside swooped down on India quite a number of times, and carried on their loot and exploitation to the standing disgrace of humanity. He has warned free India to be vigilant about the strategic importance of these routes, however much minimised by the aerial developments of today.

The author's insistence on the popularisation of Sanskrit as the major unifying force in India's evolution shows how fully conscious he is of the profundities of Indian culture and their irresistible influence on her progress and advancement.

It is time the history of India was rewritten from a deeper understanding of the 'inwardness' of her culture which inspired, motived and sustained the organic process of her evolution through the ages, pointing out the meaning of that evolution, the purpose it seeks to fulfil in the life of the race, the forces that have ever worked to help forward the progressive realisation by India of her destiny.

India started on her historic adventure with the Vedic Seers' vision of the Light in which was born her soul and its urge to follow the line of the Spirit, guided by the Shakti towards the attainment of her goal assigned by God. In an appraisement of this greatest spiritual factor in India's development the land must necessarily come as the inevitable mediator equating the Physical with the Spiritual. The land of India has a meaning, all its own, being, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'a conscious formation of the divine Shakti,' the inner meaning also of the Tantrik conception mentioned before. That is why it has ever been chosen not only by men but also by the gods so that the Mother might fulfil her purpose in human evolution. Sri Aurobindo once said that India was to him the Mother, the eternal and infinite Mother, the compassionate Mother of man. The truth of India lies hidden

in the supreme secret of her motherhood to her children and to the children of the earth. And does not that vision envisage the oneness of her history and geography forming a composite expression of that motherhood?

The book under review is in many ways a geographical introduction to India's history, remarkable for its wealth of new information, remarkable also for its treatment of the subject from a fresh and original standpoint. It will have fully served its purpose if it stimulates a re-reading of India's history in her proper light and a recasting of her history in its proper mould.

The publishers deserve the gratitude of the country for the great services they are rendering to it by bringing out valuable books at a cheap price and with a fair get-up.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA